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THE CHILDHOOD OF ART

THE
CHILDHOOD OF ART

OR

THE ASCENT OF MAN

A SKETCH OF THE VICISSITUDES OF HIS UPWARD STRUGGLE, BASED CHIEFLY ON THE RELICS OF HIS ARTISTIC WORK IN PRE-HISTORIC TIMES

BY

HERBERT GREEN SPEARING, M.A.

QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

VOLUME I

ERNEST BENN LIMITED

LONDON: BOUVERIE HOUSE, E.C.4

First Edition 1912
Second and Revised Edition . . . 1930

709.01
Sp31
2 ed
v.1

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
MORRISON AND GIBB LTD., LONDON AND EDINBURGH

TO

MY FRIENDS

WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

IN RECOGNITION OF THE INFLUENCE OF THEIR LIVES

UPON THE WORKS AND THOUGHTS

OF OTHER MEN

84609

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

SINCE 1912, when this book was first published, there have been notable archæological discoveries in many parts of the world. Some of them have slightly dispelled the fog which still hides so much of the early history of man's development, but most of them, although sufficiently dramatic and astonishing to awaken widespread interest in the habits and achievements of vanished races, have only added picturesque details to the connected story I tried to tell; they have not made it necessary to reconstruct any part of it.

In Spain, many more rock pictures have been found of a well-developed impressionist style of art, fostered apparently by the cultural eddies formed by the increasing contact of peoples living under widely different conditions of soil and climate.

In Egypt, explorations around the Fayoum by Miss G. Caton Thompson have tended to bridge over the gap which still exists between the simple civilisation of the cave-men and the socially and industrially much more complicated life of the neolithic period. In the pyramid tombs of Sakkara several statues have been found, showing new early stages in the extraordinarily rapid evolution of Egyptian sculpture,

though we are still in the dark as to its origin. The unexpected revelation at Ur of the Chaldees of a genius for building and for representing animal forms in the round suggests a clue to the problem. Mesopotamia is a stoneless country. Neither architects nor sculptors could flourish in such a land, but when some of them migrated westwards and reached the rocky cliffs that border the Nile south of the flat and fertile Delta, they must have revelled in the abundance of such fine material still unexploited by the prosperous inhabitants. The latent seeds of art naturally expanded quickly in that genial soil, and soon produced temples and statues which were and are the wonder of the world.

The wonderful discoveries by Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Howard Carter of the golden treasures buried deep in Tutankhamen's tomb have added to our knowledge of the wealth and refinement of Egyptian rulers at that time, but have not increased our respect for their artistic development. They afford another instance of the goldsmith's decorative art, supplanting the really representative art which had striven to express ideas and lead mankind to nobler thoughts.

The extensive and expensive excavations undertaken by the English and Americans at Kish and at Ur of the Chaldees, and by the Germans at Fara, have not thrown much light on the origins and progress of Sumerian art, but they show that those cities had reached a high standard of material and

mental development at a period which is supposed to be anterior to that of the earliest dynasties of Egypt, though it is still almost impossible to frame any definite and detailed correlation of the dates of the rulers of Chaldea and Egypt previous to about 2000 B.C. With regard to the earliest known Sumerians, those of Elam, much light has been thrown on their origins and migrations by the discoveries of Sir Aurel Stein in Persia, of Mr. E. Mackay in Beluchistan, of Sir John Marshall in the Indus, and of Mr. J. G. Anderson in China. Two closely reasoned and exhaustive *Studies* of their results, with copious illustrations and references, have been published by Dr. H. Frankfort in 1924 and 1927. He has come to the conclusion that the art of the inhabitants of the second city at Susa was subject to an influence which had issued from a great centre of early culture in North Syria, but did not spread any farther eastward, though it had considerable effect in South Mesopotamia and also westwards as far as Crete. The proto-Elamites of the first city and of Moussian and of Tepe-Ali-Abad were of a different race, with widely differing art ideals. Their origin still remains a mystery, but their influence did not die; it seems to have been felt in central Mesopotamia and also all along that probably ancient trade route through India to China. It is perhaps only an interesting speculation, but one cannot help imagining that the rich decorative goldsmith's art of Ur betokens the previous

existence of a higher representative art of sculpture and painting evolved in less wealthy cities. Some day we may discover its relics buried within those mysterious mounds piled up in the remote fastnesses of Elam.

Neither in Crete nor in Greece have there been any sensational discoveries, but the careful labours of Sir Arthur Evans and other workers have shown that the excellence of Cretan and Greek art has its roots very far down in the history of the past, and was probably due to more ancient and more varied influences than had hitherto been supposed. Even a short account of these new discoveries would be more suitable for a text-book of archæology than for this history of man's development. I believe that those who wish for more details will prefer to read them in the original memoirs mentioned in the revised Bibliography at the end of Volume II.

In conclusion, I may note one minor discovery of interest (*see* illustration). Until this little figurine (about three inches by two inches) was found by Mr. Woolley at Ur, in a great burial pit, which he dates at about 3500 B.C., no representation of an ass in the round had been discovered in any part of the ancient world, although wall paintings of that animal are to be seen in early Egyptian tombs. By a curious coincidence two similar figurines were found almost at the same time by Professor Langdon in a similar burial pit at Kish, near Babylon. Being made of copper, they are much corroded, and

therefore we cannot be sure that originally they were of such good workmanship as the other, which was made of thin electrum—a natural alloy of gold with a variable amount of silver. In the Chaldean pit (fully described in the *Illustrated London News* of 23rd June 1928) was also found a small silver bull, a fine contrast in its sturdiness to the gracefulness of the little donkey. It almost seems as if the

Figure of a donkey in electrum, which adorned the silver reining of a chariot-pole: found at Ur by Mr. Woolley. (By permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.)

early Sumerian Chaldeans, who may be descended from those artistic proto-Elamites, had inherited the genius of the cave-men for portraying animals and also their unskilfulness in representing human forms. The numerous inlaid or engraved scenes of domestic and military life found at Ur are almost infantile in their crude simplicity. In style they are

very similar to the much later Sumerian plaques found at Lagash. (*See* Figs. 242, 247, 248.)

It may be noted that the ass was then a worthy subject for an artist, because the horse had not yet been tamed. To ride or drive asses was a symbol of dignity.

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INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, when the plan of this book was first being sketched out, it seemed as if there would be little else to do than to make selections from the reports of the various exploration societies and from the works of modern archæologists who have dealt with the periods included in its scope. Of course but little help could be expected from the old-fashioned antiquaries, for they looked upon art much in the same way as the Greeks regarded language; everything that was not Greek was barbarous and hardly worth considering.

In this present century, owing to the better facilities for travel and the greater security of life in foreign countries, many very important discoveries have been made. As the investigations have been carried out more scientifically than heretofore, the explorers have preserved or described many relics of artistic work which the "collectors" of a few years ago would have thrown aside as worthless.

Apparently, then, all that an author had to do when dealing with this subject was to fit the new details into the sketches which previous writers had given of the progress of art in various ancient periods. Unfortunately two serious difficulties were encountered

in trying to follow this simple plan. All recent archæologists, although devoting a good deal of attention to art, have had such an immense amount of material to deal with that they had not time to take a comprehensive survey, but were obliged to confine themselves to a comparatively small portion of their field. Sometimes the accounts of the results achieved by these various workers left great gaps untouched; sometimes they overlapped, but being treated from different standpoints and on different scales, they did not always present a harmonious picture.

As regards the books dealing with entire periods or districts, they were found to be so vague, or so incomplete in their treatment of the earlier manifestations of artistic skill, that it was impossible to fit the new details into those old outlines.

In trying to devise some practicable method of giving a comprehensive account of the progress of mankind, it seemed at first as if a bird's-eye view would be desirable, but such a view cannot be well rendered even by a painter, still less by a historian. A writer's work must give consecutive, not instantaneous impressions, and his pages represent a passing through rather than a hovering over the varied scenes he would describe.

Travellers who have climbed a lofty hill, rising by many broken steps and ridges from the level plain, have noticed that each ridge may have its own special points of view, its own charms, its own difficulties and before it was surmounted it may have appeared

to be the highest point attainable. Such climbing seems to me to be symbolic of the history of the human race; therefore, instead of attempting to describe all the art fields occupied by various nations, I determined to write only a connected story of the most successful of the upward wanderings by which mankind has reached its present level. This plan excluded all decadent art and all artistic strivings of races which seem not to have attained any higher level than had been reached by those who lived in earlier times.

In tracing the history of the pioneers of art, it is neither possible nor desirable to refrain from noticing the companions of their journey and the circumstances that determined the direction in which they should turn their steps. I know that my mental picture of these men, and of the conditions of their travel, is sadly lacking both in colour and in form. My reproduction of it may perhaps be deemed a vain digression; I only offer it as a rough outline to be filled up and corrected by more capable workers possessed of better opportunities.

I have omitted architecture from my survey, because it is so dependent on material conditions, and is therefore not a very sensitive indicator of the waves of thought and feeling that affect mankind. And in truth, there have been but two really distinct styles of architecture in the whole history of the world: first, the style dependent on the use of a few massive units relying on their weight for their stability;

secondly, the style evolved by designing constructions to be built with numerous little blocks bonded together by some material of a different nature. Experiments in the first style were made by the dolmen builders, were improved upon by the Egyptians, and were perfected by the Greeks. The second style seems to have been adopted by the Chaldeans and their successors in the Babylonian plains; but, although they accumulated vast quantities of material and were well acquainted with the principle of the arch, they never seem to have been able to co-ordinate the substance and the form into one harmonious whole. Not until Gothic times did men realise that grace and dignity might be embodied by combinations of many units, each individually insignificant. Is it possible that in the future still smaller units may be the factors of a third style in architecture? May concrete buildings some day succeed in satisfying mankind's desire for harmony and beauty as well as for mere utility? Such buildings are now as much despised as were those early wooden structures, the forerunners of the classic style, and the crude brick forerunners of the Gothic, but who can foresee the results of honest evolution?

These architectural evidences of man's aspirations suggest a strange reflection. In early days stability could only be obtained by nations whose rulers had individual power and grandeur; in later times the structure of good government was built up by numerous responsible administrators; what forecast

can we make of the result of using a material that to our forefathers seemed no better than vile mud fit to be trodden underfoot?

In compiling this book, one of my greatest difficulties has been to decide how much importance should be given to the various branches of art. To critics who would complain that some have received too much attention while others have remained almost unnoticed, I can only answer that I have tried to do my best with the material at my disposal. Some periods are rich in sculptured work, others in painting or in pottery. Some regions are still almost unknown, others have been well explored, but all the results of those explorations are not equally accessible. The historian has to gather the crumbs that fall from the explorer's table, and the food he gets is sometimes not easily digestible. Occasionally the law of copyright about illustrations prevents him from even picking up the crumbs.

But as a rule the original workers in these arduous fields are most generous in allowing others to utilise the results of their investigations, and I have to thank many of them, not only for their kind permission to make extracts from their publications but also for the readiness with which they have assisted me in my work and sent explanations of doubtful points. My grateful thanks are especially due to Professor Henri Breuil (Institut de paléontologie humaine, Paris); Miss M. A. Murray, lecturer on Egyptian Archæology, University College, London; Monsieur J. de Morgan,

Director of the French explorations in Persia; Professor R. C. Bosanquet, of Liverpool; and Professor E. A. Gardner, of London, for much kindly advice and assistance during the progress of the work, and for reading the proofs of the chapters referring to the periods of which they have made a special study. MM. Ed. Pottier and Salomon Reinach and Professor Flinders Petrie have constantly allowed me to refer to them for information, and many other well-known workers have been equally ready to respond to my numerous inquiries about various details.

For facilities in consulting books and examining specimens I am deeply indebted to the authorities and the officials of many libraries and museums, but chiefly to those of the Ashmolean, Oxford; of University College, London; of the South Kensington Museum; of the Greco-Roman Department, and of the British Antiquities Department in the British Museum.

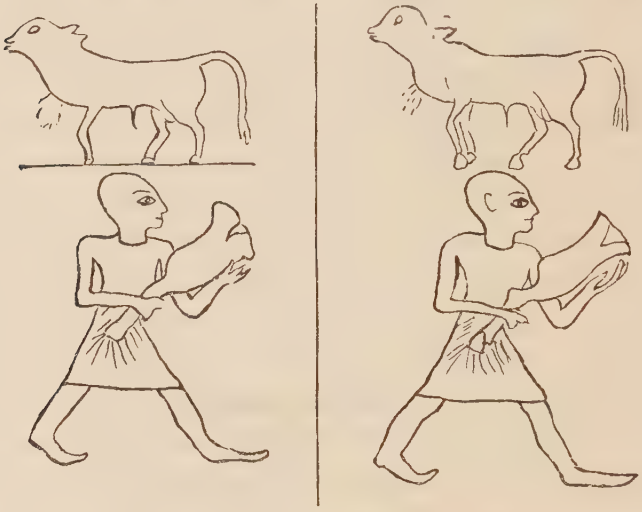
Many thanks are also due to those who have assisted me in obtaining illustrations, especially to Sir Arthur Evans, the President, and to the Council of the Hellenic Society and of the British School at Athens; also to Professor Flinders Petrie, of the British School of Archæology in Egypt, for having allowed me to make such a large selection from the accurate and handsome illustrations in their reports and journals. As there are over five hundred separate figures in my collection I cannot mention here the

names of all my kind contributors, they will be found in the list on page ix., where I have also tried to give the original source from which the drawings or photographs have been taken.

It is unfortunate that such information is very often omitted, so that it is difficult or impossible to verify points of detail. The necessity for verifying such points before basing any argument upon them will be realised by noticing the strangely un-Egyptian attitude of the calf (Fig. *b*) on the next page. It is taken from a facsimile exhibited in the British Museum, but the draughtsman who copied the original papyrus, not understanding why the calf had only three legs, added, apparently on his own responsibility, another bent foreleg. Far be it from me to infringe on the domain of specialists by suggesting any reason why the Egyptian artist should have given only three legs to the poor beast, but the original papyrus, still safely preserved in the portfolios of the Museum, shows that he certainly did not give any more. As blood is spurting from the breast of the animal, and an amputated leg is being carried by a man depicted just below the calf, it might be possible for learned Egyptologists to solve the problem.

This instance would not have been worth mentioning if it had only been a case of ordinary lithographic work, for it is very difficult to ensure accuracy in such renderings. I have to acknowledge that some of the lithographic illustrations in this book are faulty both in drawing and in colour, especially

Fig. 389, pl. xvi. The peculiar tint of Greek pottery is so seldom accurately rendered that I sent up a fragment of an Attic vase as a pattern, but the result is rather more unsatisfactory than usual. The three-colour photographic process employed for Figs. 385



a *b*

Rough tracings taken from facsimiles of the Papyrus of Ani (No. 6) published by the Trustees of the British Museum—(*a*) in 1890, (*b*) in 1894. The two editions vary considerably in points of detail. I have only compared No. 6 with the original papyrus, but I am told that all the other plates in the 1890 edition are more accurate than those in the 1894 edition.

and 386 gives a much better approximation to the variable tint of Greek vases.

Copyists in all ages have made deviations from the originals and have exaggerated their defects, especially when they had to hurry over their work. Mistakes will creep in even when photographic renderings are used; therefore the only safe plan is

to consult the actual specimens. It may, perhaps, not be out of place to remark that the illustrations in this book are to be taken merely as illustrations of my statements, not as proofs of their accuracy. Examples sufficient to prove any general statement would be too numerous, and often too fragmentary, to be interesting to the general reader. Such proofs must be sought in the works of specialists, although indeed some specialists are quite as much inclined as any ordinary member of the public to accept insufficient proof and to proclaim the coming of the summer as soon as they find a single swallow.

In a book of this sort it would also be impracticable to give much documentary evidence for every statement or conclusion. There is no finality in art or in history, all conclusions and theories are really but working hypotheses, liable to be modified by fresh discoveries. Mankind too long has pinned its faith on fundamental doctrines, and has accepted assertions of immutability quite as unfounded as the claim made by the lawyers of the Medes and Persians. Our so-called certainty is merely a degree of probability; it is not certain that the sun will rise to-morrow, but the probability is so great that we are quite justified in acting as if it were absolutely true. And on a varying scale this is the case with all other human calculations; our conclusions and actions are reasonable enough when the balance of probability is in their favour. The great difficulty is to hold the balance fairly. I have therefore tried to give the sources of my

information, and to indicate whether there are a few or many examples of the facts quoted in support of the theories, but I am painfully aware how hard it is to reach the original sources, and how easy it is to distort or disregard the facts that have been ascertained.

In the technical details of my work I have had many willing helpers and much able criticism and advice as to its literary form from my friends Mr. T. W. Gould, Dr. F. W. Mann, and Mr. J. R. Stainer. My sister has very kindly relieved me of the irksome task of making the index.

Finally, I must express my grateful thanks to Mr. Frederic Whyte for suggesting that I should write this book.

THE CHILDHOOD OF ART

CHAPTER I

PALÆOLITHIC CAVE PAINTINGS

What is Art? To discuss it is easier than to define it. Many definitions have been given, none of them altogether satisfying. Let us discuss its origins; perhaps they will help to show what it is.

Time was when men talked of golden ages, of wonderful periods during which special forms of human energy had manifested themselves in such perfection that it was useless for the existing degenerate race to do anything but admire and, if possible, to copy the results then obtained. To men in this frame of mind primitive forms of government, of religion, of literature, or of art had no interest and no significance. They looked back to imaginary good old times, to the ages of faith, of the classic authors, or of the old masters, with a reverence which is now perhaps not sufficiently paid to periods of high achievement; but beneath their reverence there seems to have been a feeling of helplessness and despondency which must have

impeded them in their attempts at copying and reviving the lost glories.

On the other hand, to those who have become imbued with the ideas of evolution, of gradual progress from early forms and origins, there is a special fascination in the study of these origins; and such study seems to me to be likely to produce a feeling of hopefulness and a vitality of work which must surely tend to the production of far better results in the future.

In the domain of art such an immense amount of good work has been done during the last twenty years, by the systematic well-regulated labours of trained explorers and excavators in many different parts of the globe, that our conceptions of the origin and progress of artistic strivings and achievements have had to be greatly modified. We find that the origins of art are much more remote than they were formerly supposed to be; and even in the remotest periods we find traces of varying phases, of spasmodic development, of stagnation, and also of retrogression. Obeying some mysterious impulse, and starting from an unknown centre or possibly from various centres, these waves have swept slowly over the whole world, running up to great heights in certain favoured localities, and leaving others untouched by their influence, often forming queer cross currents and confusions, and even occasionally rolling in contrary directions at the same time.

Their progress is like a rising tide; some waves gain a little ground, while others, not reaching so high as their predecessors, relapse, leaving only a shallow film wherein wriggle and crawl queer exponents of the movements they think they dominate and lead.

The wonderful discoveries that have been made, during the last few decades, have shown conclusively that there have been several of these waves, each consisting of a period of gradual improvement, a short culminating period, and a third period of more or less rapid debasement. It is rash to generalise, and still more rash to prophesy; but as the highest waves in very ancient lands have been surpassed in other countries at a later period, is it not possible, and even probable, that future waves will reach to even higher grades of perfection?

Professor Flinders Petrie, in his interesting book, *Revolutions of Civilisation* (1911), has tried to give these waves a mathematical form. Whether his results are accepted or not the book brings into relief the rather neglected fact that no country has two apogees in art. Could it be expected? Do we find in history that any country ever comes to the front again after it has once lost its pre-eminence? A sad reflection for decadent nations, for it is true, not only in art but also in all other spheres of excellence. Men may talk hopefully of regeneration, but what instances are there of really great revivals in art or in literature, in political or in intellectual power?

It almost seems as if such power were due in some mysterious way to soil and not to race, for no invading race has ever reared a higher edifice on fallen ruins. An apogee once reached, no farther soaring flight seems possible, a blossom once matured, then the exhausted land brings forth no more.

Even Egypt, reputed so unchangeable, so inexhaustible, renovated each year by fresh layers of soil from distant climes, and invaded by many a conquering race, has shared the universal fate. Her revivals were more vigorous than those of other lands, but the successive waves never reached the former heights, and the decline was regular, though slow.

Waves imply the existence of a force or forces to produce them and to determine their size and direction. What are the factors of the forces that impel men to concentrate their energies on various forms of activity; why are certain periods characterised by artistic advance, others by intellectual progress or by materialistic improvements?[1]

Here we embark on a sea of troubles, and we have to call in a number of expert assistants to help us in navigating these stormy waters. Work has been done in this domain by archæologists, ethnologists, anthropologists, geologists, physiologists, psychologists, and even philologists; therefore the art historian is liable to be "brought up with a round turn," as they say at sea, by some of the members of this heterogeneous and learned crew

EGYPT
WESTERN ASIA.
EUROPE.
Susa.
South.
North.
A.D. 100
0
B.C. 100
500
1000
1500
2000
2500
4500
5000
5546
Ptolemaic
Dynasties.
Cleopatra.
Parthians.
Julius Cæsar.
Etruscans and Romans.
Alexander.
Persians.
Xerxes.
Darius.
Cyaxares.
Nebuchadnezzar II.
Greeks.
MARATHON.
Solon.
XXVI.
Assurbanipal.
Tiglath-peleser III.
Halstadt.
La Tène.
David.
XX.
EXODUS.
Rameses II.
XIX.
New Kingdom.
Cassites.
Babylonians.
Assyrians.
Myceneans.
SIEGE OF TROY.
Lake dwellers.
Thothmes III.
XVIII.
Hittites.
Late Minoan.
TROY 6TH CITY. BUILT.
IRON AGE.
Petrie, Berlin,
B.C.
B.C.
The Hyksos, or Shepherd Kings.
Middle Kingdom.
3579
2000
XII.
Middle Minoan.
Minyans.
TROY 2ND CITY. BURNT.
BRONZE AGE.
Hammurabi.
Sumerians and Akkadians.
Gudea.
TROY 2ND CITY. BUILT.
Naram-Sin.
Sargon of Akkad.
Old Kingdom.
VI.
V.
Khafra.
IV. Khufu (Cheops).
Early Minoan.
Elamites.
III.
Ur-Nina.
II.
STONE AND COPPER.
Proto-Elamites
I. Mena.

whenever, instead of merely describing results, he attempts to trace their causes or even to give a comprehensive view of their chronological sequence.

It is therefore with some diffidence that I have drawn up the accompanying set of tables. They are only to be taken as rough guides, not as representing any settled decision as to the merits of conflicting theories about dates. Those previous to the second millennium are more a matter of conjecture than of calculation.

The first thing that is apparent in such a list is the small area that it covers. America is not included, because it was cut off from the rest of the world for so many centuries or millenniums that its artistic development seems to have been quite independent of the old world civilisations; at any rate, it is impossible at present to correlate them satisfactorily, although many attempts have been made and many rash theories formulated.[2]

Of Africa and Asia only a very small part has been scientifically studied; judging from the archæological treasures that have been discovered by comparatively few workers in Egypt and the regions round Babylonia, we may hope for wonderful additions to our knowledge when the desert places of North Africa, Central Asia, and China have been more thoroughly explored by competent observers.

It may perhaps seem odd to talk about looking for art relics in desert places, but the reason for searching for them in such regions is that, in districts which

are cultivated the record has generally been systematically destroyed, or allowed to perish by neglect, even when their inhabitants claim to be civilised. We have not to go very far afield for examples of such destruction, and we need not reproach other nations for their vandalism when London, the richest city in the world, frequently allows the destruction or removal of the relics of its past life, because it grudges the expense of preserving them.

There is a certain element of sadness in the reflection that it is in the poorest districts that investigators may hope to gain the richest treasures, for it means that our gains are due to the losses of our predecessors. Between the lines of the record of our successes may be read the unwritten record of their disasters and catastrophes. Thus in one place we may see how the ruthless barbarian has swept away an effete civilisation, and in the very violence of his destroying zeal has covered up and preserved evidence that otherwise would have decayed and crumbled into dust. In another place volcanic ashes have suffocated an entire population, but have preserved for us specimens even of the food they ate and of the clothes they wore. Or instead of sudden disaster there may have been the long-drawn agony of a gradual change of climate, drying up the water-courses, and thus starving the inhabitants, or by the persistence of cruel winds covering up their fields and dwellings with relentless waves of all-devouring sand.

Then, after many centuries, the archæologist comes

with spade and pickaxe, uncovers the scene of desolation, gloats over his rich finds, and rejoices the hearts of museum authorities, adding fresh treasures to those already heaped up in their great glass cases. But not much sympathy is felt for the unfortunate losers of these treasures, or for those who perished at their burial. Perhaps it is well that it should be so. The general stock of human sympathy is not too large; we have not such a superabundant amount of it for those living around us that we can afford to waste any on those who died thousands of years ago.

Let us return to our list of periods. At the bottom is that indefinite period called the palæolithic, which lasted much longer in some countries than in others not very far removed from them. It was characterised by the absence of any implements of metal or even of stone, except such as could be fashioned into shape by mere chipping. Certainly the chipping was often beautifully done, especially towards the end of the period, when the art of chipping flints reached a point higher than it ever attained again until the times of the early Egyptian dynasties.[3]

Palæolithic men do not seem to have had any houses or any domestic animals; it is still a matter of dispute whether they had even the rudest sort of pottery. At first sight it does not seem likely that in such a stage of civilisation there would be any art at all—as we now understand the term. But explorers in uncivilised lands have found fairly good drawings (Fig. 60) and even sculptures, done by modern races

of men when they were still quite ignorant of the use of metals, therefore we have no good reason for assuming that art is necessarily dependent on material civilisation. Still these discoveries of the artistic productions of modern savages did not render it probable that we should find traces of the art of men who passed the palæolithic stage so many thousands of years ago, that even the climate of their country has changed, and the beasts they fought with have become extinct.

Until quite recently there were no such traces beyond a few carved horns (Fig. 1), and a number of simple but spirited sketches of animals scratched on fragments of bone or stone (Fig. 2). Then came some astonishing discoveries—so astonishing that for many years archæologists refused to acknowledge them as genuine.

In 1879 Señor Marcelino Sautuola was exploring a large cave in his estate at Altamira, near Santander, in Spain, to see if he could find there any stone axes, arrow-heads, or other prehistoric remains similar to those which had attracted his attention at the Paris Exhibition of 1878. The mouth of this cavern had been hermetically sealed up in prehistoric times by masses of rock fallen from the roof, and cemented with a stalagmitic deposit. A few years previously some blasting operations in the vicinity had caused fresh falls, and had revealed a small fissure through which access was again obtainable.

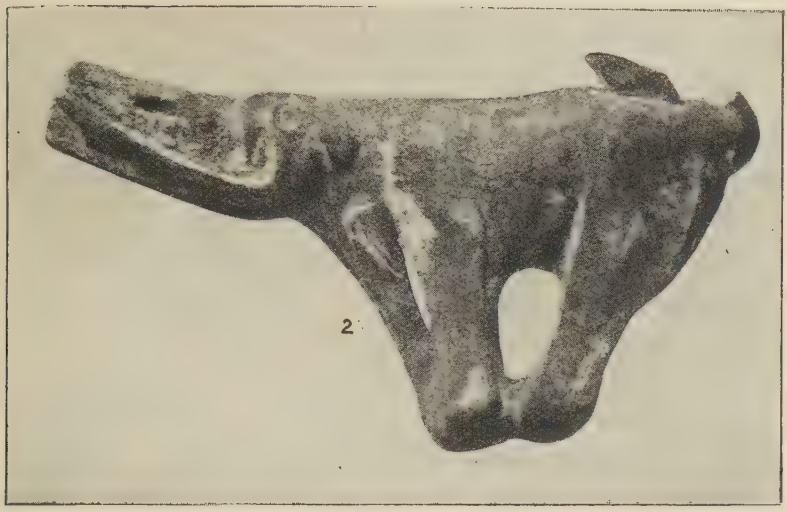


FIG. 1.—Mammoth carved out of reindeer horn; found in the soil under a rock shelter near Bruniquel (Tarn et Garonne) during the excavations made by M. Peccadeau de l'Isle in 1866. Inferior work, done in the Magdalenian period by a carver who probably had never seen a mammoth. It used to be regarded as the handle of a dagger. British Museum. Actual size.

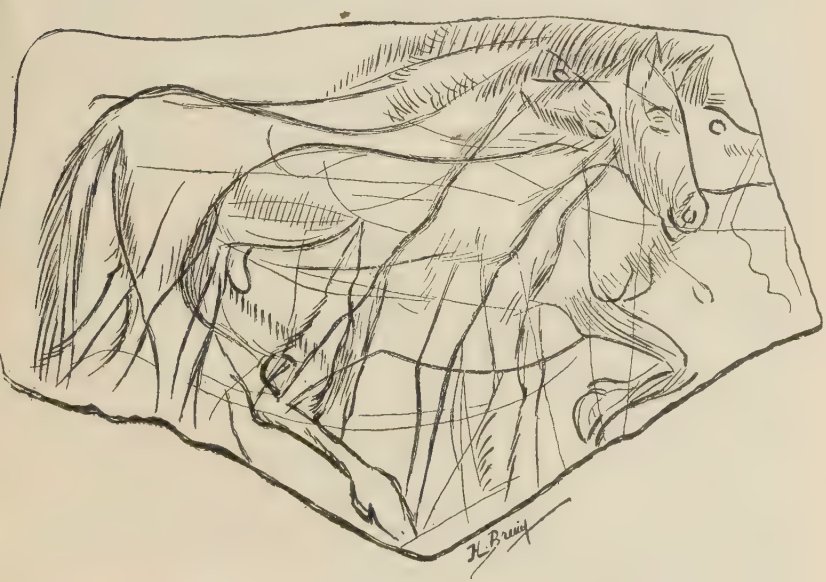


FIG. 2.—Sketches scratched on a piece of limestone found at Bruniquel. British Museum. Two-thirds actual size.

Señor Sautuola in his earlier visits to the cave had noticed curious markings on its sides, but he had not paid much attention to them until one day when he brought his little daughter with him. In some places the roof of the cavern is very low, and grown-up people have to move about cautiously for fear of hitting their heads against it. The little girl had no such difficulty. With the eager and restless inquisitiveness of childhood, her young eyes pierced the gloomy recesses, scantily illuminated by a few candles. Then looking up at the flat, threatening roof just above her head she saw what no human being had seen for many thousands of years. A painting of a great wild beast loomed through the darkness, and her startled cries quickly brought the rest of the party together to gaze upon the strange animal she had discovered. One by one other paintings revealed themselves to their astonished eyes. Some were black, others red ; some were complete animals, others only heads or unfinished sketches, altogether a score or more (Fig. 3).

There seemed to be no attempt at grouping them to form what we should now call a picture. That could hardly be expected, for the art of grouping does not appear to have been developed even among races of much higher culture until thousands of years later. Among the herd could be distinguished deer, horses, and wild boars, but the majority were bison, a species long extinct in all Europe except in the great forests of Lithuania.

Now that paintings by palæolithic man have been

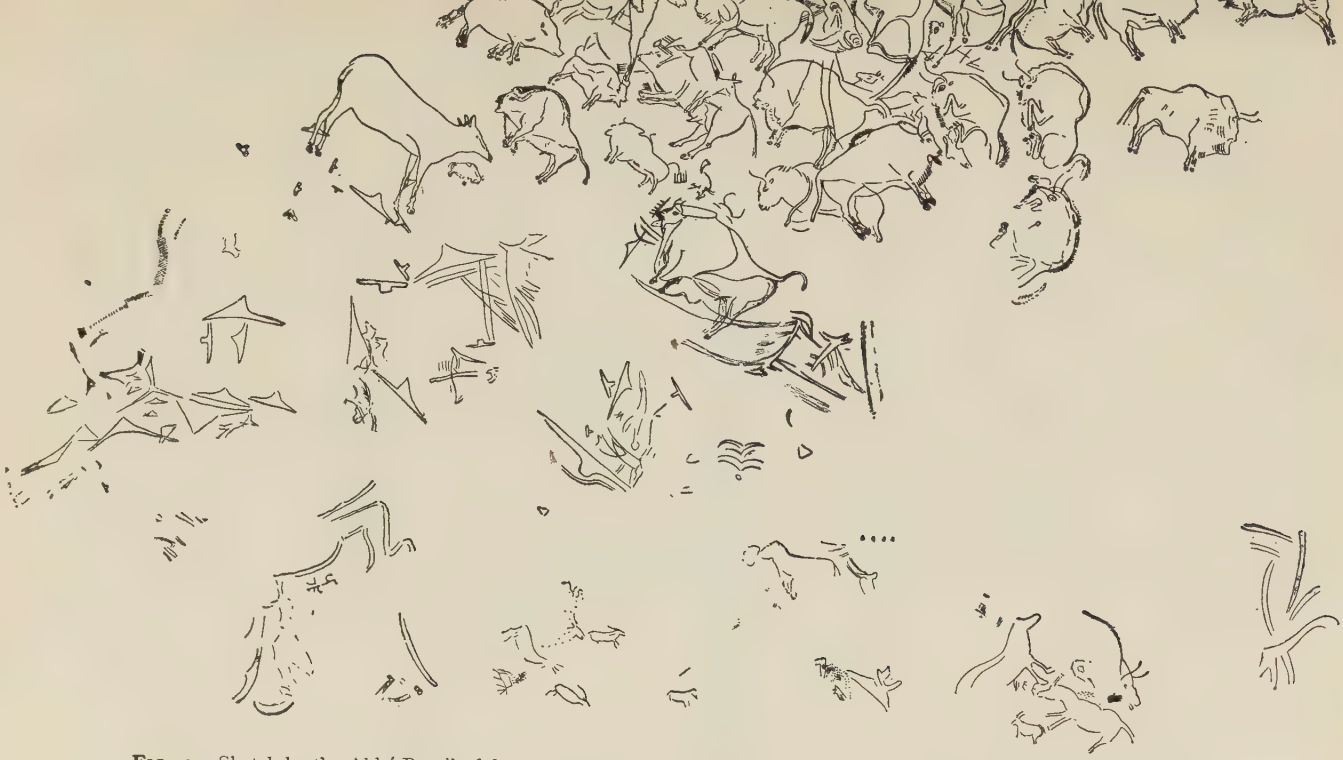


FIG. 3.—Sketch by the Abbé Breuil of the conglomeration of figures painted and incised on the low flat roof of a wide part of the cavern at Altamira. The larger animals are more than six feet in length.

found in many other caves,[4] it seems strange that Señor Sautuola's careful and scientific account of his discovery should have at first been received with incredulity, even by the most eminent archæologists. Some of them visited the cave and went away convinced that the paintings were forgeries, or at the best an idle freak of some eccentric modern artist. For nearly thirty years the chief experts steadfastly refused to accept them as genuine. Before they had repented and acknowledged their mistake Señor Sautuola died.

Now that he is dead his memory is honoured in a magnificent monograph for which the Prince of Monaco has generously provided the necessary funds. It is a large quarto volume containing a detailed report by MM. Emile Cartailhac and the Abbé Breuil of all the various drawings and paintings in the cave, with photographs, sketches or coloured illustrations of most of them.

These learned and careful workers have proved that the pictures belong to several distinct periods, and show a gradual progression from comparatively rude attempts up to a bold and definite style which, in their judgment, "places the old painters of the glyptic ages far above the animal painters of all the civilisations of the classic East and of Greece." This is a sweeping assertion; experts are generally inclined to overestimate the merits of work to which they have devoted special attention. It is a fault in the right direction, and is an encouraging sign

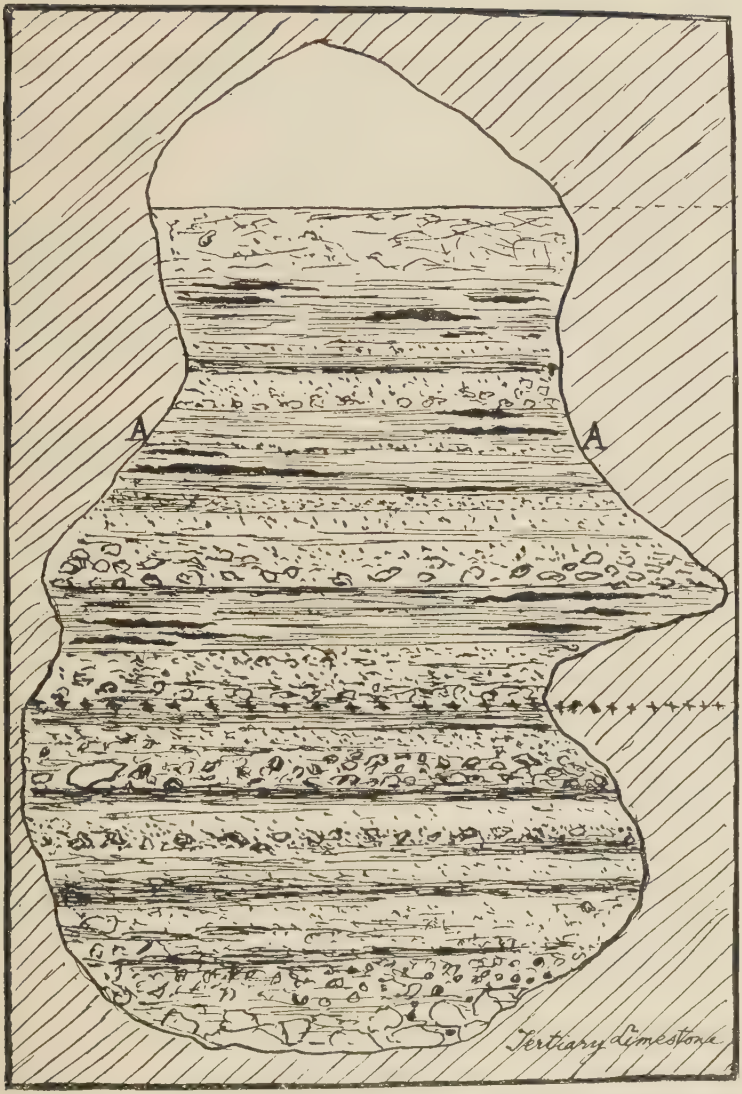


FIG. 4.—Section through the twelve feet of stratified deposits of sand, mud and gravel formed during the palæolithic period in the cave at Pair non Pair (Gironde). Explored by M. Daleau 1881–1896. The thick black streaks represent layers of charcoal and ashes, the sites of the ancient hearths of the troglodytes (cave men). The incised drawings are found on the level A A. From a sketch given to the author by M. Daleau. See page 15.

that hidden beauties may be discovered by those who will search for them diligently. There are too many critics who seem to think that their proper function is merely to point out defects.

Before discussing the methods and results of these palæolithic artists it may be as well to give an account of the other discoveries which led up to the recognition of the Altamira paintings as genuine relics of the prehistoric ages.

In 1881 M. F. Daleau, an experienced archæologist living in the Gironde department, began to explore a cave at Pair non Pair. In order to avoid any possibility of mistakes being made through the carelessness or dishonesty of the workmen, he allowed no work to be done there except in his presence. Therefore, although it is not a very large cave (about 50 feet long by 10 feet broad and 14 feet deep), it took him fifteen years to remove and examine all the deposits with which it was filled almost up to the roof. He thus dug through the débris and relics of seven different periods of occupation, each covered with a fairly thick layer of stones or mud which contained no relics at all. These barren layers were accumulated in the long intervals when the cave was not occupied by human beings. In this way each previous record was sealed up and a new sheet provided on which the inhabitants unconsciously wrote the history of their times.

They wrote it in characters which are difficult to read, and now archæologists have given difficult

Fig. 5.—B. Figure incised on the side of the cave at Pair non Pair. From a photograph by Amtmann presented by M. Daleau.

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names as headings to the chapters. M. Daleau has kindly sent me a plan (Fig. 4) of the various layers, from which it will be seen that only two chapters, the Mousterian and the Aurignacian, are represented at Pair non Pair. There are four others in the palæolithic series, two of which, the Chellean and the Acheulean, are previous to the Mousterian. They do not come into my story, for they have not as yet yielded any evidence that the men of those times had any artistic perceptions beyond the recognition of symmetry when fashioning the stone weapons used in those periods. The other two, the Solutrian and the Magdalenian, are subsequent to the Aurignacian, and will, later on, provide us with many subjects for discussion.

The chief thing which concerns us now is that, when the cavern had been emptied of this accumulated mass of clay and stone, M. Daleau discovered faint signs of the figure of a horse engraved upon the rock. He at once set men to clear away the earth still sticking to the sides of the cave, and he had the whole surface washed with a strong jet of water. Then gradually emerged from their multi-millennial tomb strange records of the ability of hand and brain of the earlier artists of a long vanished race (Fig. 5).

The style is quite rudimentary, but not childish. There is no attempt at representing any animal in movement. The art standards of the period made that impossible. These artists had not yet got

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beyond drawing in absolute profile—that is to say, they only drew one fore and one hind leg, omitting or concealing the other two (Fig. 5-*a*). However, they were bold enough to tackle one difficult problem, one that baffled also many a later race, the problem of representing an animal turning its head round to look backwards (Fig. 6).

FIG. 5-*a*.—By comparing this outline sketch (made to illustrate an article written by M. Daleau in 1897) with the photograph, the reader will be able to form a better idea of the actual appearance of the incised drawings described and figured in the following pages.

In the previous year, on the sides of a cave at La Mouthe, another archæologist, M. Emile Rivière, had found several drawings similar in style to some of the simpler ones in the Altamira collection, though the subjects were different, for in this case reindeer and mammoth were among the animals represented (Figs. 7 and 8).[5]

This discovery had made the sceptics confess that Señor Sautuola might have been right after all, but M. Daleau's incontestable proof left no doubt in the matter. Men's eyes were opened, they examined the walls of other well-known caves, and within the last few years some thirty palæolithic picture galleries have been discovered and described.

The Spanish school seems to have been the best, or perhaps one should say, it is in Spain that the

FIG. 6.—Incised outlines of animals "in absolute profile." Pair non Pair. One has its head turned as if looking at the other. *Actes de la Société Archéologique de Bordeaux*, 1897.

FIG. 7.—Reindeer incised on the sides of a cave at La Mouthe (aux Eyzies, Dordogne). The entrance to this part had been blocked up by mud and gravel in palæolithic times. It was discovered by a peasant when levelling the outer cave to make a store-house.

FIG. 8.—Incised mammoth. La Mouthe.

best specimens have been found. I use the word school advisedly, for there are many indications that gifted young troglodytes gathered there to be taught by those who had proved themselves masters of their art.

It does not seem, however, that the young cave people had much respect for the old masters. Previous work was often scratched out, painted over, or even mutilated and utilised for parts of some new picture (Fig. 9).

This custom of erasing or painting over previous work has rendered it possible to determine the order in which the various styles succeeded one another. By carefully noting and tabulating the numerous instances of superposition, MM. Cartailhac and Breuil have cleverly unravelled those strangely tangled threads. They have succeeded not only in ascertaining the order in which the different styles were evolved, but also in deciding to what particular chapters of palæolithic history each style should be assigned. Thus the gradual development of the Spanish school has been clearly traced. It affords a good basis of comparison for determining the relative dates of the pictures in other caves.

At Altamira the oldest drawings of all are a series of apparently quite meaningless black and red marks, painted with a brush. The strokes are firm and definite, but no one has yet been able to make even a reasonable guess at their signification. Some of the designs have the ladder form seen on early Egyptian

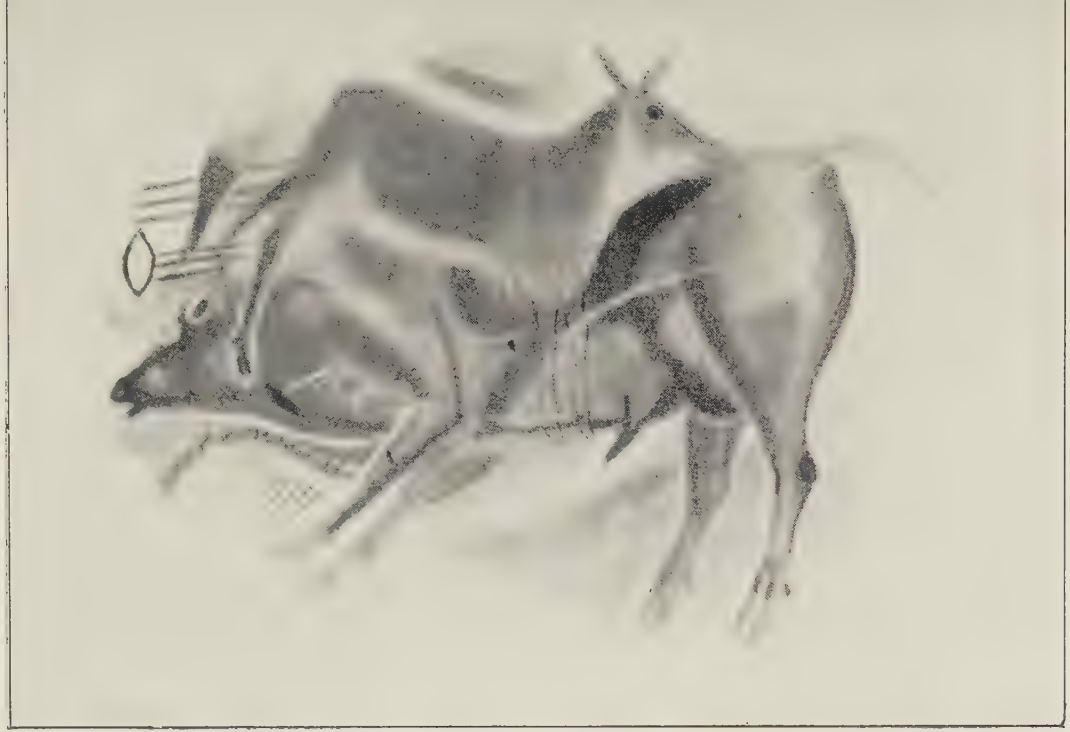

FIG. 9.—An example of the palæolithic " palimpsests " of Altamira, by means of which the comparative ages of the various styles were determined. It shows a doe superimposed on a bison. The bison had been painted over a reindeer which had previously almost obliterated an earlier painting of a bison.

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and Chaldean pottery (Fig. 209), or of rock engravings of a much later period in Italy.

Equally old are some very crude outline paintings,

FIG. 10.—Bison drawn in absolute profile, although its horns are shown "full face." Deeply incised. La Grèze (Dordogne). From a sketch by Abbé Breuil.

occasionally red, but generally black, and a few "graffiti" or incised drawings, the lines of which are cut to a depth of more than two inches. Their style is similar to that of those drawings at Pair non

Pair, which were covered up entirely by Aurignacian deposits, and therefore cannot be later than the very earliest part of that period.

In 1904 drawings of the same style were found on the sides of a cave at La Grèze, when M. Ampoulange had removed the numerous Aurignacian layers which completely filled it, thus the correctness of MM. Cartailhac and Breuil's classification was amply confirmed. It is rather curious to note that the La Grèze artist gave two horns to his bison (Fig. 10), although the rest of it is in absolute profile. This hesitation as to how much should be represented and how much should not, is common among primitive artists of all ages.

It is impossible to express in terms of years the duration of this Aurignacian stage of development, or indeed of any other stage until we come much closer to historic times. In the latter half of last century, after that men had begun to recognise the futility of that ill-founded system of chronology which confidently placed the creation of the world at about six thousand years ago, scientists went to the other extreme and ran riot in millenniums. The antiquity of this globe having been admitted, and the ideas of evolution having penetrated every branch of study, vast claims were put forward for sufficient allowance of time for all the wonderful changes that were known to have taken place upon this planet. If geologists asked for millions, why should the archæologists be content with paltry centuries? The glacial epoch was

the archæological starting-point, accordingly that was dated at a few hundred thousand years B.C.

The pendulum has now swung back. Professor de Geer of Upsala, after years of careful observation and innumerable measurements of the glacial deposits of southern Sweden, proposes to date the last glacial epoch in that district at only ten thousand years ago. As man is known to have lived in Europe during some of the interglacial periods this does not help us to date the very beginning of the palæolithic age, but that age is now supposed to have ended here only eleven or twelve thousand years ago, and there are no signs that any other quarters of the world were much farther in advance.

This new dating would afford great encouragement to optimistic sociologists. If man could raise himself so quickly from the condition of a naked speechless grubber of wild roots to that position of material and intellectual power which he occupies at present, what gigantic strides may he not make now that he has the forces of the universe within his grasp. We rule as kings over forces that were unknown to the most mighty emperors of former ages: we have access to the accumulated wisdom of past æons; shall we be content merely to enjoy the privileges of great rulers without accepting any of the responsibilities?

We boast, and justly boast, of the immense progress made in one short century, of the enormous changes in the material conditions and limitations of our lives, changes far greater than those of any ten

or twenty previous centuries. Who has had the benefit of those changes?

Physicists say that unequal expansion in a body will set up unstable equilibrium, that ill-balanced strains will relieve themselves by fracture. Has there been equality of expansion throughout the body politic? Whose strains have been relieved?

Unless correspondingly immense changes be made in our social and political conditions will not all bonds be burst, and the complicated fabric of our civilisation perish miserably, shattered by the enormous and ill-balanced forces generated within its own boundaries?

This is a long digression, but when trying to trace the windings of the road by which mankind has travelled, it is impossible to avoid casting one's eyes occasionally along the still untrodden part, wistfully wondering whither it may lead.

CHAPTER II

PALÆOLITHIC SCULPTURE

Before going on to describe the various other styles of painting in these French and Spanish caves it will be as well to give a short account of a theory as to the origin and development of drawing first formulated by Ed. Piette, one of the most brilliant of that numerous band of French archæologists who have rendered such distinguished services to science.

As early as 1873 he had published in the *Bulletin de la Société d'Anthropologie* (Paris, 18th April) an article maintaining that "man had to make a great effort of genius when creating pictorial art. To represent solid objects by lines on a flat surface is not the idea which would naturally first come into his head. The art of sculpture led him in Solutrian times to bas-relief, and that led him on to making incised lines, and thus in the succeeding period he learned to draw."

Unfortunately the materials for consolidating his theory, although fairly abundant, were not then sufficiently well classified. Unexpected discoveries were constantly being made, and they did not always agree with Piette's conception of the simplicity and regularity of this development.

He had noticed that art relics were not found indiscriminately in all the different levels. Certain varieties occurred only in certain deposits, and these deposits belonged to well-defined periods, which were often separated from each other by a great lapse of time. Gradually he succeeded in establishing a veritable sequence both of style and material, which came as a surprise to many archæologists, but is now generally recognised as conforming to the usual course of artistic development.

The conclusions he came to were that in the layers below the Solutrian there were no incised drawings but only sculptures, mostly in the round (Figs. 11 to 14), that the succeeding layers contained flatter specimens, carved on both sides but in poor relief, occasionally assisted by incised lines,

FIG. 13.—Horse's head carved in reindeer horn. Found at Mas d'Azil. Twice actual size. Now at St. Germain. From a drawing in *L'art pendant l'âge du Renne,* by permission of Masson et Cie., Paris.

FIG. 11.—Girl's head carved in ivory. Found in the soil at the entrance to the Grotte du Pape, Brassempouy. A slight roughness of the ivory under the right eyebrow gives the impression that an eyeball and pupil had been drawn there, but it is probably quite fortuitous. The rendering of the hair resembles Egyptian work (Figs. 163 and 170); no sound conclusions can be made from similarities in such simple and obvious methods of representation. The mouth is not indicated in any way, a common omission in the early work of many races (Figs. 105 and 279). About one-third larger than actual size. Now in the Museum at St. Germain.

FIG. 12.—Female torso, ivory, found at Brassempouy in 1896. Actual size. Collection, St. Cric. From *l'Anthropologie*, by permission of Masson et Cie.

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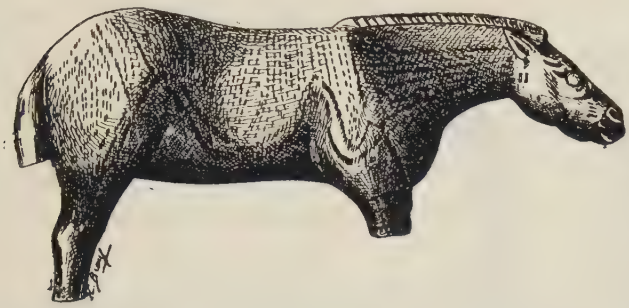
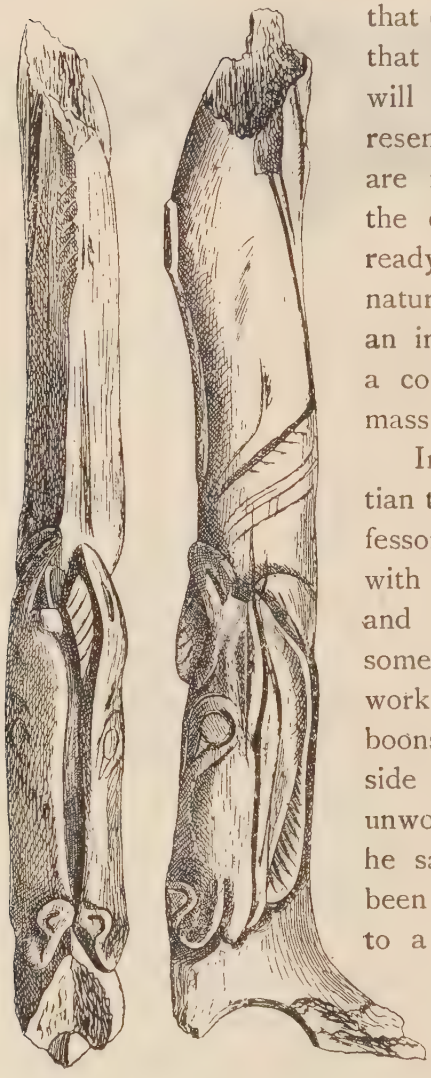


FIG. 14.—Horse carved in ivory, probably from a mammoth tusk. Now in M. Nelli's collection. Found in the Grotte des Espelugues at Lourdes. Early Magdalenian period. Actual size. From *Revue Archéologique*, 1909, p. 388.

that in subsequent deposits the objects were no longer free standing, but had a background which prevented the sculptor from representing both sides of his subject; in fact they were bas-reliefs on a small scale (Fig. 15). In the latest deposits of the palæolithic period even these bas-reliefs were unknown, but there were a great number of engraved pictures, many of them of a very high order of merit.

Piette maintained that this sequence of development was due to two causes, or rather to one primary cause, which was accelerated in its action by a secondary cause. In art, as in all other work, man generally follows what physicists call the line of least resistance; when he has a choice of methods he chooses the easiest. Desiring to possess representations or memorials of familiar objects the uncultured savage treasures up any piece of wood or stone which seems to have some resemblance to



that object. He soon finds that a little artificial help will much improve that resemblance, then the steps are not very great from the carving of blocks already partly shaped by nature to the carving of an imagined figure out of a comparatively shapeless mass.

In a prehistoric Egyptian temple at Abydos Professor Petrie found, along with numerous terra-cotta and ivory figures of apes, some blocks of stone roughly worked to represent baboons (Fig. 16). By the side of them was a large, unworked flint, which, as he says, "seems to have been kept for its likeness to a baboon. No other large flints were found in the whole temple area, and these must

FIG. 15.—Reindeer horn bâton or magic wand, carved with heads in low relief. Found in a cave at Mas d'Azil, Ariège, near the ashes of a hearth of the Magdalenian period. Now in the local museum. Two-thirds actual size. From *Revue Archéologique*, 1909, p. 398.

have been brought a mile or more from the desert. As they were placed with the rudest figures of baboons that we know, it seems that we have here the primitive fetish stones picked up because of their likeness to sacred animals, and perhaps venerated before any artificial images were attempted."

a *b*

FIG. 16.—*a*. Baboons roughly carved; *b*. Large flint resembling a baboon. From *Abydos*, Vol. II., Plate 9.

M. Salomon Reinach, in his *Sculpture en Europe avant les influences gréco-romaines*, has followed rather the same line of thought as Piette, but with this difference. He does not attribute the modification always to an original desire to attain any definitely conceived result. He thinks that the fortuitous resemblance of certain geometrical shapes—either of natural or artificial objects—to the human form, gradually by force of suggestion led to these shapes

being modified into actual representations of human figures. He says, "la forme géometrique a suggéré la forme anthropomorphique," and he gives some curious examples of this evolution. They are taken from much later periods, and were made by a race which did not show sound natural capacity for portraying the human form.

When the primitive artist had obtained sufficient mastery over his ideas of form to be able to create natural objects out of shapeless blocks, he began attempting to represent them by some easier method. The most natural device was to go on making the same sort of carvings, but to carve them less deeply. The resulting images certainly had a flatter effect, but they resembled the originals quite well enough for practical purposes, and were much more easily made. Piette called these flat carvings "contours découpés" (Fig. 17).

Then came into play that secondary cause which forced the palæolithic artist to move more quickly along this line of development. The material he had been in the habit of using became less easily obtainable. The noble mammoth with its great curving tusks of fine grained ivory had hitherto supplied him with a hard and homogeneous substance which well repaid all the care lavished on it. Gradually a cruel change of climate drove it from those regions, and its place was taken by the horse and by the reindeer.

Instead of precious ivory, our artists had to use rough horns and bones.

Now neither of these have the same texture all through. They both discourage deep cutting, for then the sponge-like inner substance is reached. Thus man's natural inclination towards shallow carving was

FIG. 17.—Cat (?) carved from a flat piece of bone, the style called "contour découpé" by Piette. In M. Mascaraux's collection. Found at St. Michel d'Arudy. Magdalenian period. Actual size.

fostered, and to some extent justified. Therefore he gave up carving in the round and began to do work only in relief. Concurrently with this dearth of good material there seems to have been a great increase in the demand for small carved objects, or at all events there was a great increase in the supply. Artists had to work on the thinner portions of the reindeer horn

FIG. 18.—Bird carved in low relief on a broken "magic wand." Part of the perforation, which seems to have been a necessary feature in these wands, is still visible at the top of this specimen. It can be seen also in Figs. 15 and 29. Found at Raymonden (Dordogne). Now in the museum of Perigueux. Actual size. *Revue de l'École d'Anthropologie*, Feb. 1909.

and on the shoulder-blades of horses and other animals. These were not suitable even for bas-reliefs, so that it was not only easier but also continually more and more necessary to depend on obtaining effects by means of numerous shallow incised lines (Fig. 18). The consequence was that the carving gradually deteriorated, and in time was entirely superseded by drawing.

Piette's grand generalisation, the fruit of many years' patient investigation, has shared the fate of most sweeping statements and has not been found applicable to all cases, for, as we have seen (p. 15), discoveries have been made of drawings which are quite as old as the sculptures. As these drawings are not nearly so good as the carvings, the real conclusion seems to be that primitive man had been tentatively striving in various

ways to represent natural objects, and had made much more rapid progress in carving than in drawing.

In truth, drawing on the flat is not the most obvious and natural way of representing solid objects. Even in simple outline drawing we have to come to a common understanding or convention that certain lines mean certain things. Such an agreement is not easily arrived at, for solid objects are not as a rule bounded by hard and fast lines. Consequently the untutored eye is better pleased with an image or a model than with a picture.

The carved object makes less demands on the ordinary man's faculties of observation and memory; it appeals to the sense of touch as well as of sight; it can be tested in various ways, and its appearance can be examined from various points of view. The strange superiority of sculpture over drawing, which is evident in the middle division of the palæolithic period and is also traceable in many other subsequent periods, becomes intelligible if we regard representation on the flat as possible only for men whose perceptions have been strengthened by long use or who have developed a desire for expressing ideas which cannot conveniently be embodied in a carving.

In this early prevalence of sculpture over drawing I think we may see the beginning of that never-ending struggle between naturalism and conventionalism, between realistic and schematic systems. Looking back along the dim vista of past millenniums we can faintly trace the varying fortunes of the battle, and

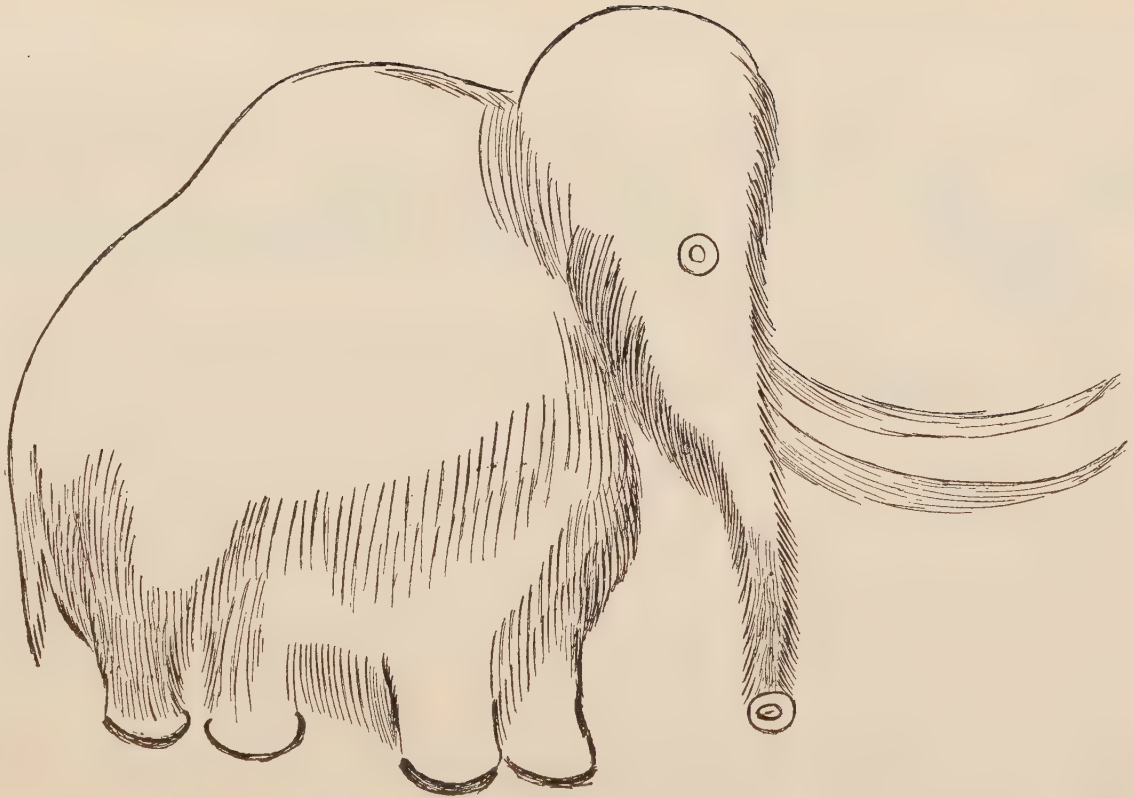


FIG. 19.—Small sketch of a mammoth, one of several very similar drawings made by scraping shallow lines on the surface of older pictures painted on the sides of a cave at Font de Gaume (see Fig. 21). The tusks resemble those of an elephant rather than of a mammoth, not being so strongly curved as usual in that species. All these sketches seem to have been made by one artist towards the end of the palæolithic period when the mammoth was nearly extinct. They may be merely reproductions of paintings he had seen and not remembered accurately. Size, two feet.

FIG. 20.—Rhinoceros drawn with rough strokes of red paint on the side of a cave at Font de Gaume. It is very indistinct and difficult to decipher. The interpretation of it as *Rhinoceros tichorinus* is confirmed by its similarity to several other drawings of this species which have been found scratched on pieces of stone from palæolithic deposits in various parts of France. See also Fig. 57. Size, about two feet.

these glimpses of the past may help us to understand the war-cries of the present, for art is but the clothing of human ideals with material forms; and human nature, like the human body, has not changed greatly in all these ages.

We cannot expect to find much conventionalism in that strenuous Aurignacian period when the mammoth and rhinoceros (Figs. 19 and 20), the huge cave bear and stealthy lion flourished in the luxuriant forests of southern France. Man must have had a hard time fighting for his existence amongst such monsters. But for all that he managed to exercise his faculties of perception and of memory, and he created works of art that are far superior to those of any modern savages, although the material conditions of his life were not much better than theirs.

Some of his productions are most wonderful. Consider that girl's head (Fig. 11), or that female torso (Fig. 12). How came it that a wild race of hunters could produce results which, apparently, were never again achieved until men had climbed far higher up the ladder of material civilisation?

This phase of art was only revealed to us some twenty years ago. Its origin still remains a mystery, and its final disappearance is almost as mysterious. As the ages rolled on and climates changed, the herds of giant mammoth were succeeded by troops of diminutive horses, and the horses by great flocks of hardy reindeer. Yet our artists made no further progress in sculpture, and finally even the tradition

FIG. 21.—Confused group of horses, reindeer, bison and mammoth painted and incised at different periods. The lower drawing shows the general appearance of the group, the upper one gives only the lines that are incised. Some of the bison are polychrome, others are black. Total length about fifteen feet.

of it seems to have been lost. It dwindled away into mere surface decoration, and into forms which modern artists and archæologists used to consider as meaningless ornament, but which are now beginning to be looked upon as definite and even unavoidable steps in the evolution of decorative art. This point will have to be considered more fully later on.

It is rather strange that they should have begun by carving human figures, and that afterwards they chose only animal subjects. Perhaps this was due to the absence of clothing in the earlier periods. At the beginning of other waves of artistic expansion when clothing was commonly worn, men seem to have had much less success in modelling the human form, although they succeeded fairly well in making figures of animals. Of these palæolithic human figures there are unfortunately very few specimens, perhaps not more than a score, most of them too badly preserved to be easily appreciated.

Some are awkward and angular, others are grossly fat (Fig. 22). Three or four are really good, but their merits have been greatly exaggerated. Describing a torso, far inferior to the one shown in Fig. 12, G. and A. de Mortillet say in *La Préhistoire* that it is "a *chef-d'œuvre* of sculpture which, as regards its truth to nature, may well be compared to Greek art."

Until a greater number of better preserved and more complete specimens have been discovered we cannot form an accurate judgment of the results attained by these stone age sculptors. Great masses

of ivory, decomposed and pulpy, sometimes even liquid, have been dug up in palæolithic deposits. Much of it had probably been carved into forms of which we can now but faintly guess the meaning and the beauty. The few survivals, tokens of the first pulsations of human thought beating like restless waves against material limitations, convey to us only the merest ripples of those ancient storms that have convulsed mankind. Of these scattered relics, headless and armless, corroded and discoloured, pressed out of shape by successive deposits during countless ages, the merits can only be estimated by those who, in addition to a knowledge of sculptural work, have also had experience in dealing with similar objects from other periods. But battered and mutilated as they are, no one can look on them without wonderment and sorrow. Wonder that primitive man should have had eyes to see and hands to reproduce such a concept of human shapeliness. Sorrow that the vision once revealed should have afterwards been so blurred, distorted, and destroyed that for many succeeding ages the sculptor's work awakens but a feeling of pity or of shame.

It is unfortunate that the head of Fig. 12 is missing, for it might have shown what race was represented. The shape of the body indicates a better race than most of the other statuettes, some of which are so fat that they almost seem to represent a steatopygous race like the Bushmen or Hottentots. The question of the presence of two, if not three,[6] very different races

in Europe at that time belongs to the domain of ethnology rather than of art, but as these steatopygous figures are also found in many other places, and in deposits of many much later periods, they may, when they have been sufficiently studied and classified, throw a much-needed light on the development of the ideas underlying the glyptic representations of the human form.

The most complete specimen is a statuette that was dug up in the summer of 1909 in a railway cutting near Willendorf, a village lying between Krems and Grein, two small towns on the Danube, about fifty miles from Vienna. In the sandy marl of a formation, called loess by geologists, the workmen noticed several thin layers of charcoal with bone and flint implements scattered around these blackened streaks, which soon proved themselves to be the sites of long forgotten hearths and homes. I fear that in England such a find would have been forthwith carted away to form an embankment, but in Austria the ubiquitous professor soon made his appearance, and the deposits were carefully excavated under expert supervision. Few people realise how difficult it is to examine and record accurately the results of such excavations. Plans and sections have to be drawn, and the position of every important object has to be registered. There are unfortunately, even at the present day, many diggers who will not take this trouble, and are only anxious to obtain specimens for their museums, regardless of the fact that such

specimens are comparatively valueless unless full details are recorded of all the surrounding materials and objects. Tourists used to be blamed for encouraging the careless destruction of ancient deposits by greedy ransackers after saleable curiosities, but for many years the dealers have found it more profitable to manufacture forgeries of ancient relics for the unlearned in such matters. The chief temptation to professional curio hunters to turn topsy-turvy these priceless relics of the past now comes from experts, whose desire for the possession of rare specimens is sometimes greater than their desire for the advancement of knowledge. The existence of such bitter and senseless rivalries among those who are foremost in the ranks of time is sad evidence that we, although separated by the lapse of ages and a complicated civilisation, are not so very different in our desires and aspirations from those barbarians who hunted the mammoth and the rhinoceros on the banks of the ancient Danube—that ancient river which, in strange calm contrast to petty human struggles, has toiled on at its appointed task of excavating a highway through Europe ages before these savages lit their fires upon its banks, and will continue its work long after we of this age of hurry and steam have ceased to light our fires upon its waters.

To return to our statuette. A full description has been published by the authorities of the Vienna Museum,[7] to whose courtesy I am indebted for permission to reproduce this photograph of it (Fig. 22). It is

carved in oolite limestone, and is about five inches high. It is not beautiful, but it is well modelled, although the arms are only in low relief. Apparently it had no feet; of course they may have been

FIG. 22.—Female figure carved in oolite limestone. Found at Willendorf (Austria) near a large charcoal hearth covered with six feet of loess. Late Aurignacian or perhaps Solutrian. Two-thirds actual size. Now in the Royal Museum of Natural History, Vienna. From a photograph given to the author by Prof. Szambothy.

broken off by accident, and the fractured surface smoothed away ages ago. It is curious to find the calves and knees so plainly indicated, for they are generally omitted in primitive carvings, even of

much later periods. The hair is treated in a more naturalistic manner than the hair of the young girl in Fig. 11, which is rather Egyptian in its style. The face has no features carved on it; possibly they were indicated by painting: there are some traces of colour on the body. Or, perhaps the artist intentionally avoided this difficulty by bending the head forward so that the face could hardly be noticed.

One small detail remains to be noticed. On the wrists of the Willendorf statuette are seen two ornaments that look like bracelets; similar ornaments are found on other palæolithic representations of nude females. Adornment was apparently more necessary than clothing even in those early times. All the statuettes of that period are female, except one very rough specimen found at Brunn, in Moravia; and they are all unclothed. Does this show that clothing was not yet invented, or that those ancient artists had the same difficulty with clothes that modern sculptors have?

If we may judge by the customs still existing among some modern savages, it may even be true that primitive man considered it more decent to be naked than to be clothed.[8] The climate was not rigorous in Aurignacian times, clothing would then have been a luxury rather than a necessity. No bone needles have yet been found in these deposits, although they occur in subsequent ones, when the climate was growing colder.

Some day, perhaps, we may discover larger statues,

or a series of statuettes of palæolithic and neolithic age, that will enable us to trace the rise and fall of that branch of ancient art. Now we have to pass over great distances both of time and space before we can find anything to compare with them.

Unfortunately there does not seem to be much hope of so many discoveries being made during this century, unless public interest is aroused, and funds provided to defray the great cost of systematic excavations. Many of the best finds of the nineteenth century were made by chance during the construction of roads or railways. Just as geology received a great impulse from the numerous opportunities of studying splendid sections in cuttings and tunnels, so the archæologist has to thank the utilitarian engineer for unsealing some of the books of revelation that have so long awaited the advent of reverent readers. This century, however, is likely to see much less activity in railway construction in Europe, and we shall no longer be able to rely upon that source of assistance. In archæological work, as in other spheres of human activity, progress will be made in future by definite planning, not by trusting to luck; by careful training of the workers, not by "muddling through somehow."

Although no life-size sculptures of the human form have yet been found in palæolithic deposits, we have a certain amount of encouragement as to the possibility of finding them afforded by Dr. Lalanne's great discovery in 1910 in the picturesque little

valley of the Beune, a sub-tributary of the Dordogne.[3] Along the sides of this valley are many small limestone cliffs, sometimes perpendicular, sometimes overhanging, and thus forming those rock shelters which were so often used by primitive man as dwelling-places, especially when facing southwards. He knew the value of a sun-warmed habitation; such spots must have been as eagerly sought after in those days as are the sunny nooks of the Riviera at the present time.

At the foot of these cliffs are large accumulations of stones and earth washed down from the wooded slopes above, so that the rock shelters are often nearly filled up and would not be noticed by inexperienced observers. For two years or more Dr. Lalanne had been engaged in excavating some of these shelters, but he had not discovered a single human bone nor any of those relics of prehistoric art which are so frequently found in other parts of that district. He therefore set to work to probe the talus at the foot of the cliffs, to see if he could find a cave or deeper shelter where a burial might have been made. At last at one likely spot the probing stick went down several yards.

We can imagine the excitement of the workers as they dug down through the accumulated soil and found a broad layer of charcoal with various bones, some charred by fire, some ornamented with the familiar drawings of ancient animals. Flint implements were also found, but of strange shapes—implements which did not seem likely to have been

of much use either as weapons or for domestic purposes.

It was, however, rather a disappointment to find that it was not a deep cave, but only a shallow rock shelter, and there were no human bones at all.

Then came another surprise. Behind that charcoal hearth, where ancient hunters had cooked their reindeer feasts and split the bones to reach the toothsome marrow, the diggers found a raised paved terrace. Then, as with pickaxe and with spade they scooped away the earth from off this strangely levelled floor, they perceived that the rock behind was sculptured. Out from their clayey tomb arose strange shapes of bison, of reindeer and of horse, carved large as life in the hard limestone rock by men of that vanished race which has already shown us what good work it could do on a much smaller scale.

These sculptures were no triflings of an idle hour to while away the time between gross feedings and long weary hunts. They were the result of careful study and of patient preparation. Even the tools used in their execution were as well adapted for that purpose as if they had been made of bronze or steel. For those strange implements we noticed as so puzzling were soon proved to be hammers and picks, chisels and scrapers, very similar in form and size to those of a modern sculptor, although the material is but ordinary flint.

It is impossible to estimate the artistic merit of the sculptures from these photographs (Figs. 23 and

FIG. 23.—Part of a long frieze representing horses and other animals carved in high relief on the limestone of a rock shelter at Laussel (Dordogne). This horse is seven feet in length and stands out about nine inches. Discovered in 1910 by Dr. Lalanne.

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24), which of course have not been retouched. In all such cases no just judgment can be formed without seeing the originals, or, at least, good casts of them. Their present condition, too, renders it difficult to appreciate the skill of that ancient artist. The horse's legs were broken off so long ago that not even fragments of them were found in any of the supervening layers of clay and stones. Erosion has pitted the surfaces and has obliterated many of the contours, but still enough remains to show that the sculptor was not only experienced enough to render anatomical details with considerable accuracy, but was also able to execute well-proportioned work on a large scale. He seems to have planned a sort of frieze containing more than a dozen animals. Most of them are horses, but it is difficult to distinguish all the figures. The end of the frieze cannot be examined as it runs into the property of a Dr. Rudelle, and he will not allow it to be excavated.

Palæolithic man seems to have resembled the Egyptians and the Greeks in not being content with plain uncoloured sculpture, for a small portion of the horse's neck has the paint still remaining on it. It is of a curious violet colour, and is said to be some compound of manganese. Another indication of the carvings having probably been painted was found on an oblong stone palette measuring about eleven inches by six. It was covered with red ochre ready mixed for use. The paint lies there, still thick on the ancient palette, one more addition to that long list of un-

fulfilled intentions. Would it be any consolation to that artist if he knew that some of his work has endured far, far longer than the grander works of ambitious tyrants and conquerors, who vainly have crushed down their fellow-creatures in order that they might perchance raise themselves above the dreaded mists of oblivion.

We must not linger too long in this rock shelter, fascinating as it is for those who like to let their imaginations roam freely over the possibilities of the past. We may, however, notice that the occupier of this shelter seems, in choosing this situation, to have had an eye for landscape beauty, a beauty which does not necessarily appeal to all artists, and which has never been well rendered by them until comparatively modern times.

Although large sculptures are so rare and large drawings have only been found in certain favoured localities, many hundreds of small carvings and drawings have recently been discovered in different parts of Europe. It is difficult to make a comprehensive study of their artistic merits. They are scattered about in various towns in France. Even the Paris specimens are not all in one museum. The St. Germains Museum has by far the best collection, and has also casts of all the important specimens. Museum authorities are naturally very chary of giving permission to handle the original objects. They are too rare—I was going to say, too precious, but when applied to art I hate that word, containing as it does

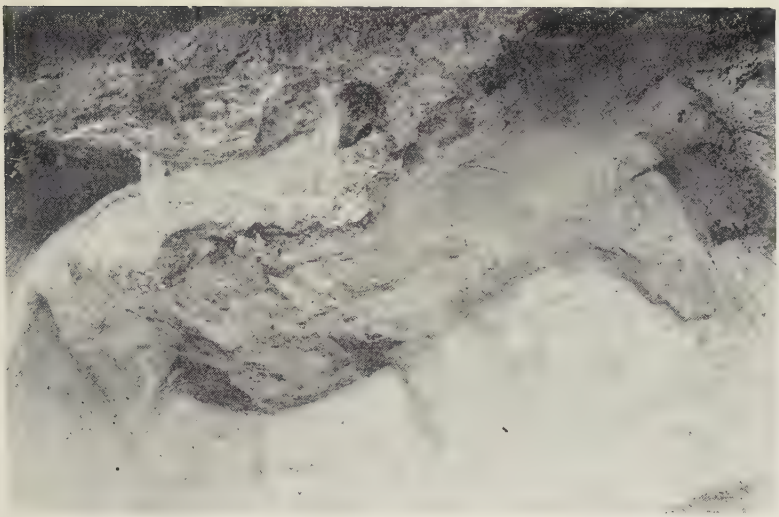

Fig. 24.—Horse, six feet long, projecting nearly twelve inches from the surface of the rock. Its back was at first not quite buried by the accumulated earth and was coated with a stalagmitic deposit dropping from the rock above.

a *b*

Fig. 25.—Human face roughly carved on the end of a piece of reindeer horn about eight inches long, found in the Grotte de Rocheberthier, Charente. Nearly actual size. École d'Anthropologie, Paris.

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the idea of price, and reminding one of the sordid question that used to be considered characteristic of American tourists, "What did it cost?" As if price and value were necessarily connected! And yet they are so in most people's eyes. Beauty and rarity are to them only valuable because they are precious, or, as economists would say, because they have a "high ratio of exchange." Make a test question of it with some of your friends, those for instance who profess to admire the beauty of real diamonds and to despise paste. If diamonds became so common as to be as cheap as glass, would they still be used as ornaments because of their intrinsic beauty? Is it not possible that people would then boast of possessing "real paste jewels, none of your cheap natural diamonds." I am afraid it is not the idea of beauty which causes them to be valued. They are worn, not really for adornment, but for ostentation, and too frequently it is only the suggestion of possessing wealth that gives pleasure to the wearer.

This may seem a digression, and perhaps such a discussion would be more appropriate later on, when, I think, we shall see many instances of the results of this confusion of ideas of cost and beauty. The position is not untenable, and may perhaps be proved by some future historian that great wealth by encouraging ostentation has debased art instead of elevating it.

But to return to our rare old specimens. The mammoth ivory and reindeer horn on which they

are carved is often decayed and frail, so that one is generally requested not to handle them more than is absolutely necessary, but to use the casts for studying details. It is impossible to make such studies from drawings, and photographs are not much more satisfactory. How useless it is to trust to drawings may be seen by comparing this photograph (Fig. 25-A) of a human face carved in ivory with this copy of an engraving (Fig. 26) of it given by Woermann in his *Geschichte der Kunst* (1900).

FIG. 26.—Drawing given in Woermann's *Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und aller Völker*, p. 10 (1900) of the roughly carved head shown in Figs. 25-A and 25-B.

Even in Piette's great work, *L'art pendant l'âge du Renne* (1907), the publication of which he did not live to see, we find that when two drawings of the same object are given on different scales the details often differ considerably. Still it is a wonderful work, with its hundred pages of coloured plates, giving many enlargements of the bone drawings and several views of the carvings from various sides.

One of Piette's best specimens is the well-known wild goat (Fig. 27), which, with the rest of his collection, has now found a permanent home in the St. Germains Museum. It shows one of the transition stages between a perfectly free-standing image, such as that of the horse (Fig. 14), and a decorative

carving in low relief (Fig. 15), intended to be looked at from one side only. It is a fine vigorous bit of workmanship, and yet it was only the adornment of a throwing-stick with which perhaps some palæolithic princeling was wont to hurl his lance against his foes. But I ought not to suggest this use of it, for, strangely enough, we do not find any signs of human warfare in those early days. In later times we find skeletons of men with the bronze weapon that killed them still embedded in their bones, and we often find examples of skulls plainly showing the great gashes of the death stroke. The only instance I know of such a gash made in palæolithic times is one on the skull of an old woman, and even she did not die from it, but lived long enough afterwards to let the bone grow together again.

A good deal has been said about war as a stimulant of art, but palæolithic artists seem to have got on very well without it. Of course there is no

FIG. 27-*a*.—Throwing-stick carved out of reindeer horn. Found in a cave at Mas d'Azil (Ariège). Early Magdalenian. Half actual size. Now in Piette's collection in the museum of St. Germain en Laye, near Paris. Similar sticks are used for throwing darts by savage tribes in the north-west of America and in Australia.

proof that there were no wars in those days—you never can prove a negative; but it is strange that none of the palæolithic pictures yet discovered represent men fighting, although that is such a favourite subject in later times. Of the chase we have a few primitive pictures. The well-known drawing on bone of a bison hunter (Fig. 28) and these recently discovered open-air paintings in Spain (Fig. 73) are examples of their treatment of this subject.

The hunter is figured in Girod and Massenat's large work, *Stations de l'âge du Renne* (1906), describing the archæological specimens in M. Massenat's collection which is now exhibited in the Musée de St. Germain en Laye, near Paris. In their description of this drawing the authors say, "the physiognomy has a certain expression of joy, which is very striking," but in their illustrations the expression of the man as given in the small drawing is different from his expression in the enlargement of it. This seems to show that the joy cannot have been very evident to the draughtsman who made the illustrations. Another writer when describing the bison says that it is grazing quietly, unconscious of danger, while a third archæologist considers that the ancient artist succeeded wonderfully in representing the terror of the great beast alarmed by the presence of its insidious foe.

M. Massenat's Collection contains some interesting specimens of magic staffs (or *bâtons de commandement*) ornamented with duplicated bulls' heads (Fig. 29),

FIG. 27 *bis*.—Photograph of the throwing-stick, Fig. 27*a*.

FIG. 28.—Bison and hunter incised on reindeer horn, found at Laugerie Basse. About half actual size. St. Germain.

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phalli, or other objects. This duplication is a curious instance of the desire for rhythm or symmetry which is strongly felt by some people, while others are as strongly opposed to it. In later times we find many examples of duplicated animals, but chiefly in drawings or else in low reliefs, and

FIG. 29.—Upper part of a "magic wand" roughly carved to represent two bulls' heads. Found at Laugerie basse. Now in the Massenat collection in the museum of St. Germain en Laye, near Paris. Actual size. From a facsimile made at the museum for the author.

they are almost invariably "heraldically opposed" —that is to say, facing towards one another, not away from one another as these bulls do. A good deal has been written about this heraldic position. When it occurs in drawings many writers are now inclined to attribute its origin, not so much to a desire

for symmetry as to a desire to represent on the flat both sides of a solid object. In the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* for 1881, Mr. G. Murray had an interesting article on this subject to which I shall have to refer later on, merely noting now that in early work animals sculptured in the round face outwards, while in bas-reliefs and drawings they face inwards or towards one another. One of the rare instances to the contrary is a very remarkable duplicated cow (Fig. 145), dating probably from one of the first Egyptian dynasties. It is in low relief, but its two heads face away from one another and present a most curious effect. The only explanation I have been able to obtain of it is that it may represent the constellation of the twins. That does not seem altogether satisfactory. It may possibly be the "image of an image," and be intended to represent an amulet. If so it would be in accordance with the general rule that animals in the round faced outwards.

The British Museum has many excellent specimens of carved bones, but owing to lack of space they are hidden away in a corner of the little iron gallery that runs round the British antiquities room. We do not care much for such things in England; they have no money value, and they are not pleasing to the eye. The study of them is so lightly esteemed that I have even heard that section called "the rag and bone department." Many educated men seem to think that any hole or corner is good enough to put such rubbish in.

Among the British Museum specimens are two reindeer carved in the round, which used to be considered as the handles of two daggers. A few years ago the Abbé Breuil, when examining the collection, noticed that the broken end of one of them corresponded exactly with the broken end of the other. He fitted them together, and thus reconstituted the only example yet known of palæolithic carving in the round in which the figures have any relation to one another (Fig. 30). It is the first instance of an attempt at grouping, and is a remarkable advance in the progress of art. Such attempts seem seldom to have been made, even in much later civilisations, until a certain degree of maturity had been attained.

Fig. 30.—Male and female reindeer carved out of mammoth ivory. Found by M. Peccadeau de l'Isle in the soil of a rock shelter near Bruniquel. Magdalenian. About ten inches in length. Now in the British Museum.

These reindeer are carved in a fairly good and unconventional style; they have none of those incised lines with which so many other

carvings have been disfigured. Instead of disfigured perhaps we ought to say ornamented, for doubtless the sculptor thought he improved his work by incising those lines upon it.

That ivory carving of a horse (Fig. 14) seems as if it would have been better without such additions, but the pattern on it is so carefully done that the artist may have had some definite intention. An almost identical pattern has been found on the body of a large horse incised on the rock in a cave at Combarelles. It has been supposed that these markings were intended to represent the colour patches of the horse's coat, but rather similar zigzag marks are found on early Egyptian drawings of elephants, where they could have hardly been meant to indicate patches of colour.

In other specimens the lines were considered to indicate harness, but that idea has been given up, as there is no evidence that the horse had been broken to the service of man until a very much later period. If palæolithic man had learned to make the horse his friend and helper, it seems unlikely that the news of such a discovery should not have spread eastwards to other countries where horses were quite as plentiful. But there are no indications of the horse, or even of the wild ass, being used in any other way than for food until about 3000 B.C., when we find an early Chaldean king represented as driving a war chariot. (*Découvertes en Chaldée*, Pl. 3bis.)

Those zigzag patterns are found on the primitive

drawings of many other races; they may be due to mere fantasy, but from what we know of the mentality of modern savages, it is more likely that they were meant to express something. Savages, however, like children, are not always consistent in their work, and they will use the same design or symbol to represent very different things (see Lumholtz, *Symbolism of the Huichol Indians*, New York, 1900). Therefore it is rash to dogmatise about these patterns, for perhaps the artists themselves could hardly have told us what they meant.

CHAPTER III

THE ORIGINS OF DRAWING

We have in modern times so much knowledge of what other artists have done, how they have failed and how they have achieved success, that it is difficult for us to realise how entirely tentative and experimental was all palæolithic art. In those days man had no previous experience to guide him, no other sculptures or drawings to copy or improve upon except those of his own race and period. Like an explorer in a virgin land he had all sorts of possibilities before him; but there was always the doubt whether the line he was pursuing would lead to fruitful fields where art could flourish and expand, or whether it would end in sterile wastes where art would surely degenerate and die. Let us not laugh at the crude results and pitiful failures of those early pioneers. Do we not make failures too? I hope so, for when we cease to make any failures our art will cease to live.

Let us try to put ourselves in the position of these pioneers. How were they to know that a certain arrangement of lines would represent an animal or a man to other men? In fact, it is extremely unlikely that these lines did succeed at first in conveying any

impression to their less gifted fellow-men. It was only by slow transitions from the actual carved model to flatter and still flatter carvings that ordinary men came to see that a thin flat form might have some resemblance to a real solid animal. They had to learn to look at it only from one point of view. It is quite likely that at first they always wanted to turn the strange thing round and look at the other side, and that is why we get those *contours decoupés* or silhouette carvings with the details fully worked out on both sides.

A friend tells me that a very small girl, for whom he had drawn the picture of a bird in profile, immediately asked why it had only one eye. He tried to explain, but he could not satisfy her. Finally she seized the pencil, turned the paper round and gave the bird its other eye on the back of the drawing.[10]

This is in accordance with the general tendency of children. They do not try to draw what they can actually see, but what they remember. In drawing a cube, for instance, children will often show four of its sides. Sometimes they will give five sides arranged in the form of a cross (Fig. 31). I have also known of a child drawing this curious form in order to show the sixth side, because he "knew it was there" (Fig. 32).

FIG. 31.

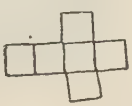

FIG. 32.

When the first low relief carvings were made they probably met with very hostile criticism as being

quite unnatural. But the *contours découpés*, or silhouette carvings had somewhat accustomed men's eyes to the one-sided view, and the reliefs were so much more durable and convenient that they soon found general acceptance. The word soon must here be taken to mean "in the course of a few centuries," for evolution moves very slowly in its early days.

In all ages there is often a tendency for reliefs to become less bold as time goes on. The palæolithic age was probably no exception to this rule. The outline of a flat relief differs very little from that of an incised drawing, therefore men accustomed to the one would soon learn to recognise the other. On the strange fragment here depicted (Fig. 33) both systems are seen; the reindeer is in low relief, part of the figure of the woman is drawn with incised lines, but her back is carved in slight relief.

The same process of development would take place with regard to the forms of details such as eyes or nostrils, and men would soon cease expecting them to be represented in relief. Thus the necessity for working in relief would die away proportionately as men's comprehension of drawing improved.

But between the crude outline forms of those definite details and the delicate tone variations produced by light and shade on rounded contours there was a great gulf to be crossed. Shall we wonder at primitive artists using strange devices when trying to cross it? Are we sure that we ourselves have crossed it? We talk glibly of a picture being life-like,

Fig. 33.—Two fragments of a thin piece of bone (probably a shoulder-blade) carved on both sides with figures incised or in slight relief. The hoofs of the deer are drawn, as in Fig. 53, not in profile but *en face*.

To face p. 58

but what do we mean by life-like? Do we mean that it is so true to life that it would immediately convey to any beholder the impression that he had a real object before him? Or do we mean that it awakens recollection and recalls an impression previously made by a similar picture? The latter explanation seems the right one, yet if it is true, it puts the life-like picture on the same level as the life-like verbal description: they both recall impressions. Unless the mind of the beholder has been trained by having frequently had his impressions recalled in a similar manner, neither pictures nor words will convey any meaning to it.

Is it not then a question of the association of ideas by long practice? Put up a notice, "Beware of the dog." Will that scare away the man who cannot read, who is not accustomed to the idea that certain lines mean certain things? Or if you put up a painted sign of a fiercely barking dog, would that scare away even the most timid cat? Cats have not been accustomed to the idea that certain streaks of paint can represent their ancient enemy. Their world of impressions is filled more with sounds and smells than with things seen and remembered. It is the remembrance of things seen which constitutes the ability to read a picture. Students of wild races say that the untutored savage cannot read a picture any better than a cat can. Perhaps the impressionists will say that the average Englishman is, as regards art, not much better than the untutored savage.

If then it is so hard to read a picture, how much more difficult must it be for an artist to devise a way of painting one that will express his ideas to others or even to himself! If it is only by association of ideas, by repeated efforts of memory and imagination that a flat surface can be understood to represent a solid object, how much stronger must the memory and imagination be that can seize the salient and essential aspects of things, and reproduce them so that others can see them too.

I suppose we all flatter ourselves that we can see things pretty clearly and remember them fairly well, but how often do we test the truth of this supposition? Here is a simple design (Fig. 34). It does not seem as if it would be difficult to remember such an easy pattern. Put away the book and try to draw it. If you find that you are not able to reproduce it, you will perhaps better appreciate the difficulties of those ancient men who could not reproduce the impression made upon their brain by solid objects with outlines far less definite.

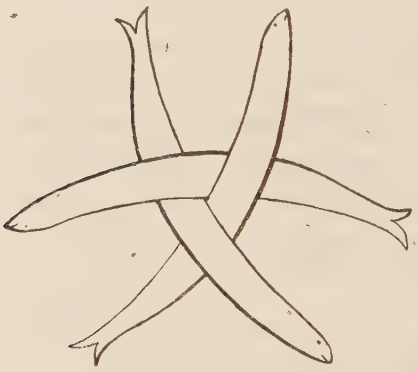

Fig. 34.

Here then we have palæolithic man face to face with that great difficulty, how to represent on the flat things that really exist in the round. It was a much

more intricate problem than the one he had had to solve when dealing with his blocks of stone or ivory, which indeed had often shown some slight resemblance to the desired shape, and awaited but the master touch to transform them into things of life which some of his fellow-men would at once recognise and admire.

Children and savages will often say that the vague lines they scribble do really represent certain definite things. Are we justified in accepting their assertions? No. Unless the meaning they attribute to their scribblings can be recognised independently by some other people these marks cannot be said to have any meaning at all. Recognition, therefore, would seem to be the test of their art value. For how can any art —plastic, pictorial, dramatic, literary or musical—be said to give expression if it makes no impression? It is not indeed necessary that the impression should be produced immediately; centuries may elapse before the meaning is appreciated. Meanwhile such a form of art may be compared to those waves of light which pass through the deep darkness of intersolar space and yet remain perfectly invisible until they meet with some responsive element. In the absence of such an element it would be useless for us to discuss the nature of those waves. It is equally useless to discuss any form of art that has not yet succeeded in conveying any impressions to mankind.

There is some difficulty in determining how far each art should be expected to convey impressions

independently of external aid. We laugh at the child artist who writes "this is a house," "this is a man" over his drawings, although similar devices were common enough in primitive periods, even among the Egyptians and the Greeks. Authors, however, do not always disdain seeking external aid to render their literary work more expressive, and musicians sometimes give strange names to compositions whose subtle influence would be perhaps better appreciated without such clumsy explanations.

These considerations lead us to suppose that the primitive artist, when first working on the flat, had to learn how to obtain from other men the recognition of the meaning of his work. It must have been a slow and painful process. The crude outlines that have been found engraved on the sides of caves at Pair non Pair and other places were probably but little understood by the art critics and the art patrons of those early Aurignacian times (see p. 15). And even the painter of that noble bison must have sadly confessed to himself that something was wrong in his representation of it with full-faced double horns and but a single leg in front and a single leg behind. Perchance the rude remarks of his neighbours about the beast having only one eye rankled in his mind, and although he felt quite sure that they were wrong he did not feel so sure that he was right in showing both its horns (Fig. 10).

There is no wonder then that all through the long ages of Aurignacian and early Solutrian times drawing

made such little progress. Lack of appreciation must have had a very deterrent effect, for environment is one of the chief determining factors in art as in all other growth. The technical side of the question must also have presented many difficulties to primitive man ; all his devices were experiments, the results of which still remained uncertain. With streaks of paint and with incising tools he had produced results which are now becoming familiar to us ; but he had also tried other processes. Recent discoveries have given strange proofs of his having adopted one method of drawing, which, although natural enough, gave such temporary and generally evanescent results that it could hardly have been expected to leave any evidence of its existence.

Perhaps some of my readers will think I am referring to that use of a bit of burnt stick which still figures in popular explanations of the origin of drawing. The burnt stick is supposed to have been used by some young girl to draw the profile of her lover's face by following the outline of its shadow cast upon a rock (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxxv. p. 153). There is every probability that a burnt stick was one of the earliest tools ever used by artists, although I believe no evidence has yet been found of its use. And at first sight there seems equal probability that cast shadows were utilised as the basis or ground plan of drawings ; though here again there is no evidence to prove it. But when we see that among all the thousands of palæolithic drawings that have lately

been discovered and described there is not a single realistic drawing of a human profile face, nor is there a single instance of any other drawing that can be taken as the outline of a shadow, I think we may reasonably conclude that shadows had no power to awaken the artistic faculty in man.

The story was started in days when theorists had not yet learned that "what has been" is much more important than "what might have been," and that the best way of ascertaining what will probably happen under certain circumstances is to find out what has happened or what does happen under similar ones. I am afraid that method of dealing with questions is still far from popular even among educated men. Professor Sayce, who, as an Oxford classical tutor and as an Egyptian explorer, has been brought into contact with many different types of mind, says, "Nothing is more common than to come across literary critics who cannot be made to understand the nature of inductive proof." Therefore the burnt stick and shadow theory will probably be popular for many generations, and if charcoal drawings should be discovered in palæolithic caves they will be quoted as affording conclusive evidence of its truth.

The method of drawing which I have alluded to as giving such temporary and generally evanescent results is the extremely simple one of using a finger to draw lines upon a bed of mud. In a cavern called "La Grotte de Gargas," at the foot of the Pyrenees, and not far from Bagnères de Luchon, large expanses

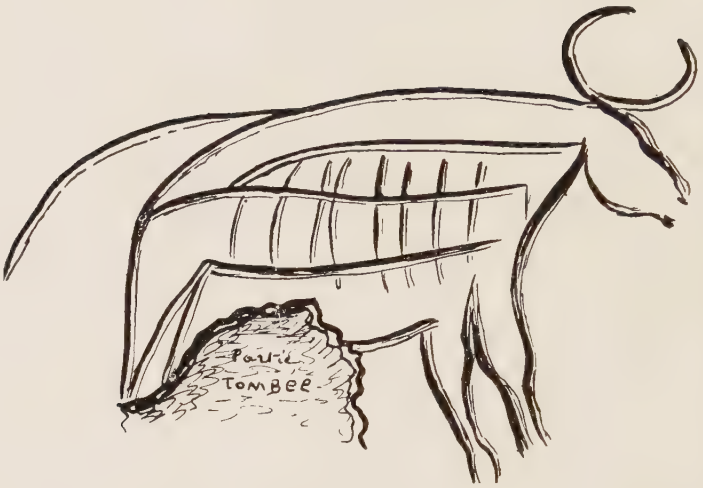

Fig. 35.—Ox drawn with the tip of a finger on the clay covering the side of a cave at Santa Isabel, near Santander, Spain. From an unpublished sketch given to the author by Professor Breuil.

Photo *Lasalle, Toulouse*

Fig. 36.—Bison drawn with the tip of a finger on the clay-covered floor of a cave at Niaux. Discovered accidentally by the sculptor Rivière placing a lamp on the floor. Magdalenian period.

To face p. 65

of the sticky yellowish clay which adheres to the sides of the cave have been found to be ornamented with numerous queer designs traced in it by human finger tips—the finger tips of men who died ten, twenty, perhaps thirty thousand years ago; so long ago that the difference of a few millenniums more or less is a matter of little importance.

Most of the designs are what we should commonly call scribblings, though possibly some meaning or reason for them may be discovered when the root motives of human actions have been more fully and more scientifically studied. Amid the intricacies of these lines (wavy lines not unlike those one may often see scribbled with chalk on blank walls and doors in English towns) are figures of horse, of bison, and of lion traced in a style even more crude than that of the incisions at Pair non Pair and La Grèze.

Since this discovery was made many other mud drawings have been found in Spanish caves. They have not yet been published, but M. Breuil has kindly allowed me to reproduce one of them (Fig. 35). There is no necessity for discussing here the proofs of their antiquity. Those who are not expert archæologists should be very cautious in dealing with the comparative ages of freshly discovered objects. I have so often seen newspaper paragraphs headed "the oldest drawings in the world," although the drawings referred to may not be more than a few thousand years old, that I am rather shy of using that expression; but in this case I think it is justified.

We may safely class these finger-tip sketches as some of the very earliest manifestations of a perception of the possibility of representing solid objects by lines drawn upon a flat surface.

At a much later period, *i.e.* in Magdalenian times, even the advanced artists did not disdain to draw pictures with their finger-tips upon the muddy walls or floors of those vast rambling caves. A happy chance has preserved some wonderful examples of their work (Fig. 36).

A curious modern parallel to the artistic habits and capabilities of these earlier cave men is afforded by some of the natives of Central Africa, although indeed, as regards material civilisation, these natives have had greater advantages than their palæolithic brethren. They can make pottery, they know how to cultivate the soil, and they have learned the use of iron. Mr. Herbert Ward, who had many opportunities of noting their ways of life when he was making studies for his bronze figures of Congo savages, tells me that they have a very good sense of decorative outline form, and are clever at carving wooden images, but have very little capacity for representing natural objects on a flat surface. One day, however, he noticed a man drawing on the sand by the side of a river. The subject of his sketch was the outline of a fish, and his forefinger served him as a pencil. This incident furnished the motive for Mr. Ward's statue "A Congo Artist," which took the gold medal in the Paris Salon of 1910. He has kindly allowed me to

FIG. 37.—A Congo native drawing on the sand with his forefinger. Bronze statue by Mr. Herbert Ward.

To face p. 66

FIG. 38.—Imprint made on the side of the cave at Altamira by a hand smeared with red paint. The outlines were apparently touched up afterwards with a brush. From *Altamira*, Pl. IV. Australian natives frequently leave the imprint of their hands in the same way on the sides of caves or cliffs.

FIG. 39.—Shape of a cave man's hand left on the wall of the cave at Font de Gaume by colouring the surrounding surface with black paint. Probably of the Aurignacian period.

reproduce this illustration of it (Fig. 37) taken from his book *The Voice of the Congo* (Heinemann, 1910). Unfortunately, he was unable to ascertain the object of the man in making that drawing.

In these old world caves of France and Spain are also found evidences of two other methods, not indeed of drawing, but of the reproduction of designs. And it might almost be said that there we have the first origins both of printing and of stencilling. For in the Altamira cave there is the imprint made by a hand previously smeared with red paint (Fig. 38), while at Gargas and at Font de Gaume we have also the shapes of hands and other objects left blank as uncoloured patterns upon a coloured surface (Fig. 39). This effect was produced by placing the object against the rock, previously moistened or otherwise prepared for retaining the paint; and then some finely powdered substance of the desired colour, red, black, or white, was thrown or scattered over it.

The imprints appear to have been almost always made by the right hand, although for a stencil plate the left hand was generally used. This seems to show that these cave men were not ambidextrous, but chiefly right-handed.

We might have thought that when the idea of reproducing several impressions had been conceived it would have soon progressed and expanded. But here again comes in the question of environment. The communities were so small that many repetitions of the same subject would not have been welcomed.

Also they had no suitable substance to print them on, such as parchment or paper.

The earliest example of the use of stamping blocks other than the hands is to be found in the "pintaderas" of neolithic times. They were small seals made of clay or stone which were extensively used

FIG. 40-A.

FIG. 40-B.

40-A.—Pintadera, or stamping block.

40-B.—Fragment of a terra-cotta figure from Mexico, showing the chest ornamented with a very similar pattern, probably made by one of these stamping blocks. Now in the Ethnographic Museum of the Trocadero, Paris.

for making ornamental designs on the human face and body; specimens have been discovered in Liguria, in Crete, in the Canary Islands, and even in Mexico (Fig. 40). Possibly some day we may find that they were used in China, and thus were the direct ancestors of the earliest known blocks for printing on paper.

The subject is perhaps more interesting to archæologists than to artists, but it is curious to see that our mechanical processes for reproducing designs are of such hoary antiquity.

Of more interest is the question, why did they wish to depict their hands on the cavern roof and walls? That, unfortunately, is still a moot point, and we have but little help from similar stampings and stencillings in Australia. In neither country does there seem to be any connection with the idea of averting the evil eye, that superstition which had, and still has, such pernicious power in Eastern lands, and in those parts of Europe which have come strongly under Eastern influence.

Now, having traced the origin of drawing from sculpture in the round through flattened carvings, where the boundary outline was the most important feature, to low relief and line incising on rock or bone, let us examine in more detail some of the results and products of this development.

The effect on man's mental and spiritual growth must have been permanent and far reaching. The mental standpoint of a man who is simply chipping and cutting away bits from a misshapen block in which he has already seen some likeness to the form he wishes to produce, is quite different from that of a man who has a blank surface before him, on which, if he has imagination, memory, and manual skill, he can portray almost any form he chooses.

The field of the sculptor is severely limited by

the nature of his material. He cannot well express swift action nor great numbers; time and space come not within his ken, for sculptors in the round cannot represent varieties of season nor of distance. Winter and summer, night and day, broad plains and lofty mountains, rushing water and waving trees are quite outside the province of his art, but the painter can range over a whole world of glorious possibilities.

At first, of course, but little advantage was taken of this new found liberty. The artist could not develop much faster than the race, but it was his privilege to be in the forefront of the struggle to emerge from mere animalism to a perception of higher things. To convey to his fellow-men the impressions of hitherto unnoticed beauty of shape or colour that had come to him as a revelation was an impelling duty. His great reward was the satisfying joy of creation experienced when his results attained some appearance of success.

How slowly and painfully this success was obtained may be realised by examining Abbé Breuil's reproductions of the drawings and paintings in the French and Spanish caverns. They are now available for students in those monographs on Altamira and Font de Gaume which are the first two volumes of a series dealing exhaustively with the whole subject. I have to thank the authors for their permission to reproduce so many of their illustrations, and I must also acknowledge the liberality of the Prince of Monaco and his chief librarian in allowing me

FIG. 42.—Bear drawn with broad strokes of red paint. It shows a spirited attempt to give the impression of action and to indicate both hind legs. It was painted in a side passage of the cave at Font de Gaume close to Fig. 41. Size, twenty inches.

FIG. 41.—Deer drawn with strokes of black paint varying in width. It is of a primitive style but no longer in absolute profile.

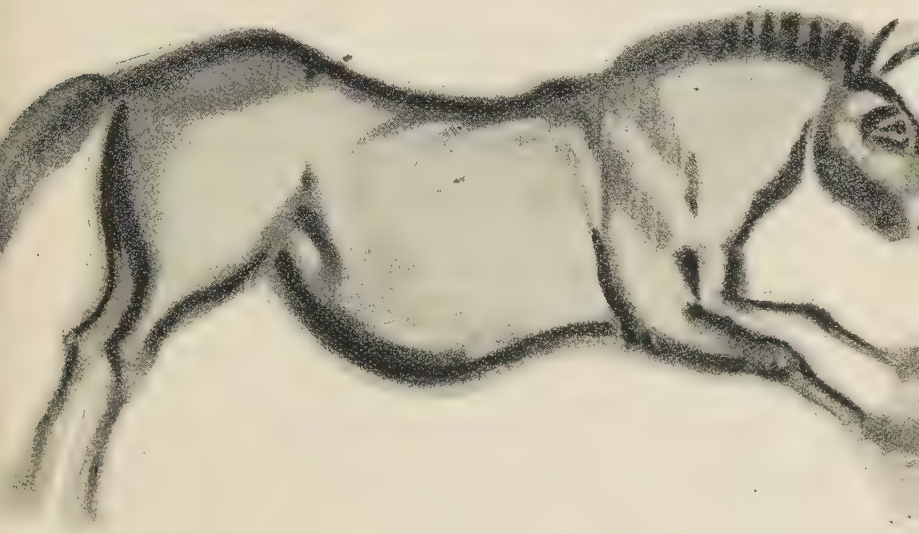

FIG. 43.—The broad black strokes have here been toned down in places. The legs are well articulated with the body, but the hoofs are scarcely suggested. The fore legs are touching the hind quarters of another horse, the pose and form of which were apparently determined by a stalactitic formation rather resembling a standing horse. Nearly four feet in length.

the free use of the blocks from which they were printed.

After the earliest crude attempts made in the Aurignacian period, comparatively little progress in drawing was achieved in the next period, the Solutrian, during which sculpture was developing and changing its character. The engraved work, however, became less laboured, the incised outlines less deep. Occasionally the surface around the head or other parts of the painted figures was scraped so as to give an appearance of bas-relief to the animal. Sometimes the manes and tails were indicated by numerous fine lines representing hairs. In time the painted outlines show an inclination to broaden out in places, and after a while the artist ventures to give four legs to his animals, at first in stiff symmetrical pairs (Fig. 41), then in a more natural pose (Fig. 42). One would hardly have expected the hoofs or the paws to present much difficulty, but they were always omitted in the earlier drawings, and were not really well drawn until the apparently much more troublesome question how to articulate the limbs with the body had been attacked and solved (Fig. 43). Modern artists still find difficulty in representing the hoofs of animals in motion, because the movements of the extremities are more rapid and complicated than those of the other parts.

Then the dead even surface of these broad outlines was modified ; it was made lighter in some places and darker in others (Fig. 44). Gradually the paint-

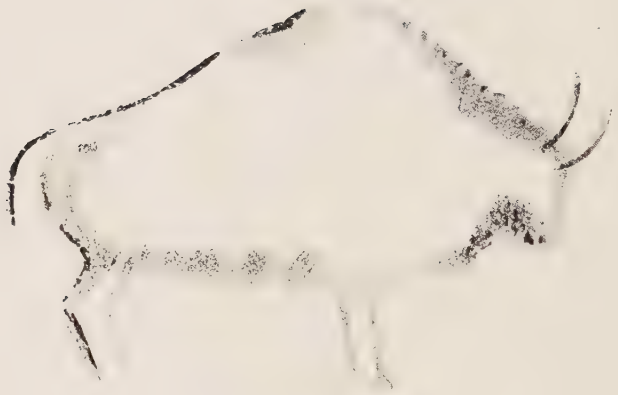

Fig. 44.

PLATE I.

Fig. 44.—The form of this bison is expressed partly by outline, partly by broad patches of colour which seem intended to make the figure stand out in relief. It is on the roof of the cavern of Altamira. Size, about 20 inches long.

To face Fig 45, *opposite p.* 74.

Fig. 45.—Black bison painted on the roof of the Altamira cave. Crude outline strokes have been nearly dispensed with. The pigment covers the whole surface and is toned to give the effect of relief, thus excelling all the known work of the Egyptians, of the Cretans, and even of the Greeks until about 400 B.C. The perspective is more accurate and the hoofs are rendered better than in Fig. 43. About three feet in length.

To face p. 74

FIG. 46.—Stag (*Cervus elaphus*) drawn on the roof of the Altamira cave with lines so finely incised that it can only be seen at a small distance. About two feet in length.

ing extended over the whole body, and was so well toned that it gives almost the effect of a good charcoal stump drawing (Fig. 45).

Towards the end of this period the

Fig. 47.—Sketch incised on the side of the cave at Font de Gaume, apparently intended to represent a human profile face. It is the only drawing of that sort hitherto discovered (1912). One-third actual size.

Fig. 48.—Drawing scratched on the roof of the Altamira cave, possibly representing a man with an animal mask like those in Fig. 49. About two feet in length.

FIG. 49.—Animal masks and disguise used by the natives of North Queensland. From *Journal of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science*, 1902, p. 488.

engraved designs are very numerous. They vary very much in size ; some are not more than a few inches in length, others measure two or three feet, but whatever their size the drawing is almost always bold and good (Fig. 46). Horses, goats, bisons, and various sorts of deer are represented; sometimes the whole body is drawn, but more often only the head is given. Scarcely any drawings of human faces (Fig. 47) have been found, but there are a few sketches of figures that seem to be meant for human beings with animal heads (Fig. 48), possibly masks for performing incantations or dances like those formerly in vogue among the North American Indians (Figs. 49 and 50). It is very disappointing

FIG. 50.—Native of Central Australia disguised as an Emu for performing incantations to secure an abundance of those birds. From *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, Fig. 73, by Spencer and Gillen. By permission of Messrs. Macmillan.

that the human form should have been drawn so seldom and so badly by palæolithic man, but all primitive workers on the flat seem to have preferred animal subjects.

The next phase is a curious one, for it seems to show a retrogression. The old idea of drawing

FIG. 51.—This horse was drawn with black pigment spread evenly over the surface, without any attempt at toning. Having quite abandoned the use of dark outlines, the troglodyte artist was unable to show the articulation of the limbs with the body as in the preceding figures. The same system of painting was employed for the red horse in Fig. 52. One-tenth actual size.

merely the outline having been entirely abandoned, various experiments were made in an attempt to satisfy the new desire for representing solidity. Different colours were tried, but were impasted thickly and evenly without any variety of tone (Figs. 51 and 52). In one cave, Marsoulas, small red or black wafer-like spots were stuck all over the body

FIG. 52.—Carelessly drawn horse covered with a red pigment impasted flatly over the whole surface without any toning. On the horse's head are traces of a later drawing of a bison, the eye, horn, and contour of its back are just visible. Altamira roof. Size about three feet from rump to chest.

To face p. 78

of the animal. They have a peculiar effect; like the spotted china dogs of modern times they must have appeared pleasing to a certain number of people, although it is difficult for us to sympathise with such strange tastes. The drawing of the untoned and of the spotted paintings is often very poor.

Among the incised pictures too we also find considerable differences of execution. Some might almost be called masterpieces, others are merely feeble sketches. They are all very faintly cut, and can hardly be seen at any little distance. Why they were made is one of the many puzzles that tantalise us with their secrets half revealed. Were there two rival schools, one of them devoted to mere splashes of bold colour, harmonies in red and visions in pale grey? Then was it ousted by prehistoric pre-Raffaelites, teaching their pupils to practise accuracy in the minutest details, quite regardless of general effect?

Some day this problem may be solved, but it will only open out fresh vistas of unexpected possibilities. To the delight of added knowledge will be given the sharp and wholesome contrast of increased conviction that, after all our researches, we are still like little children rambling along the borders of a vast unfathomed sea.

Towards the end of the Solutrian period great changes had begun to take place in Europe. The conditions of life were altering, the climate was becoming colder, until eventually, in the Magdalenian

period, it was more like that of the steppes of Tartary. The reindeer and the bison began to displace the horse, but the reindeer never seems to have succeeded in crossing the Pyrenees, and we do not find his picture in the Spanish caves.

Driven by the pressure of untoward circumstances, man had to exert more skill to get a living. He had to learn how to fashion better weapons with which to kill his prey, and better implements for his more complicated requirements of food, clothing, and shelter. The exertion must have improved his other faculties, for he certainly made wonderful progress in painting. After he had carelessly revelled for some time in the joys of dense unshaded blacks and crude unnatural reds; after he had made those innumerable studies in mere outline, he began to realise the possibilities and the value of polychrome painting.

The stages leading up to this phase are not very well represented, but fortunately we have more than a score of examples of the final triumphs achieved during the golden age of palæolithic art. They are nearly all to be found in the great herd of animals discovered by Señor Sautuola's little daughter on the roof of the comparatively small chamber near the entrance of the cavern. Specimens of the art of previous periods are also to be found in this chamber, but they are more numerous in the great halls and passages which extend much farther in.

The technique of this polychrome work is interesting. It was begun by incising the important parts of

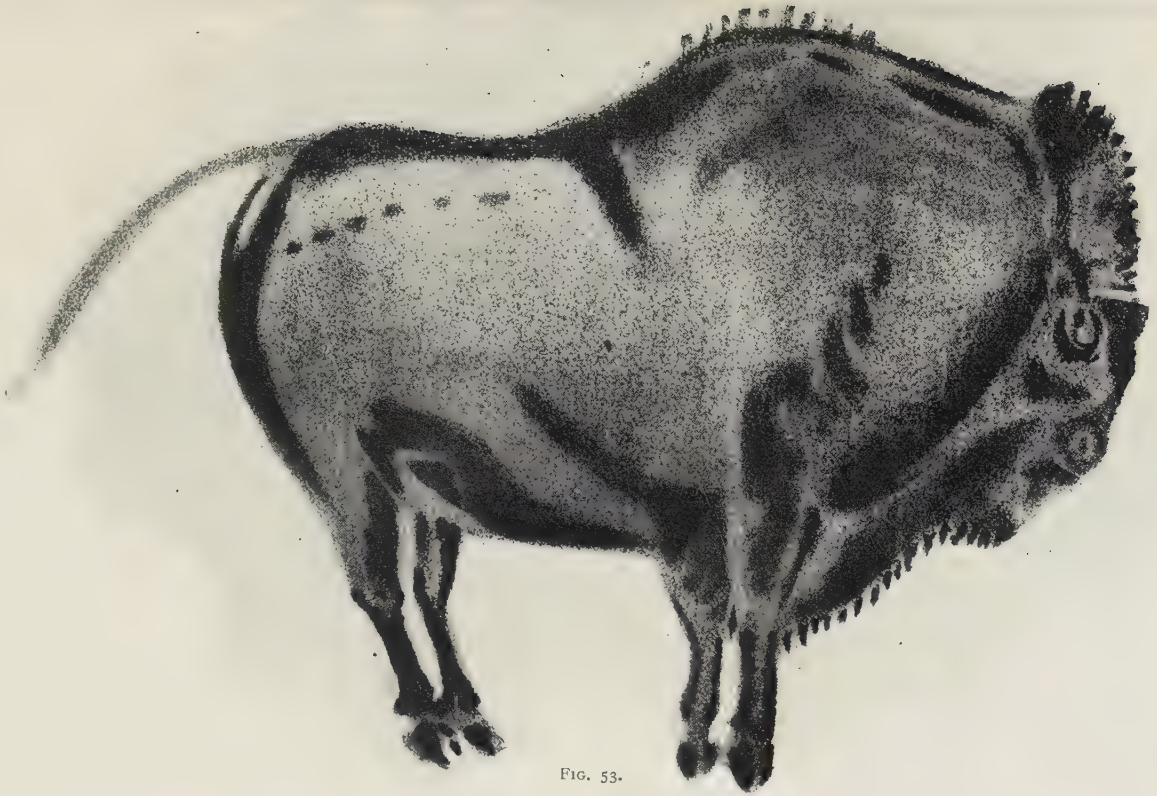

Fig. 53.

PLATE II.

Fig. 53.—Of all the animals painted on the roof of the Altamira cavern this bison is one of the best preserved and most complete, although the drawing is not so good as in some of the other figures. The fore legs are awkward and the hoofs are twisted round to face the spectator, a not uncommon mistake. (See also Fig. 33). Size, nearly five feet long. Magdalenian period.

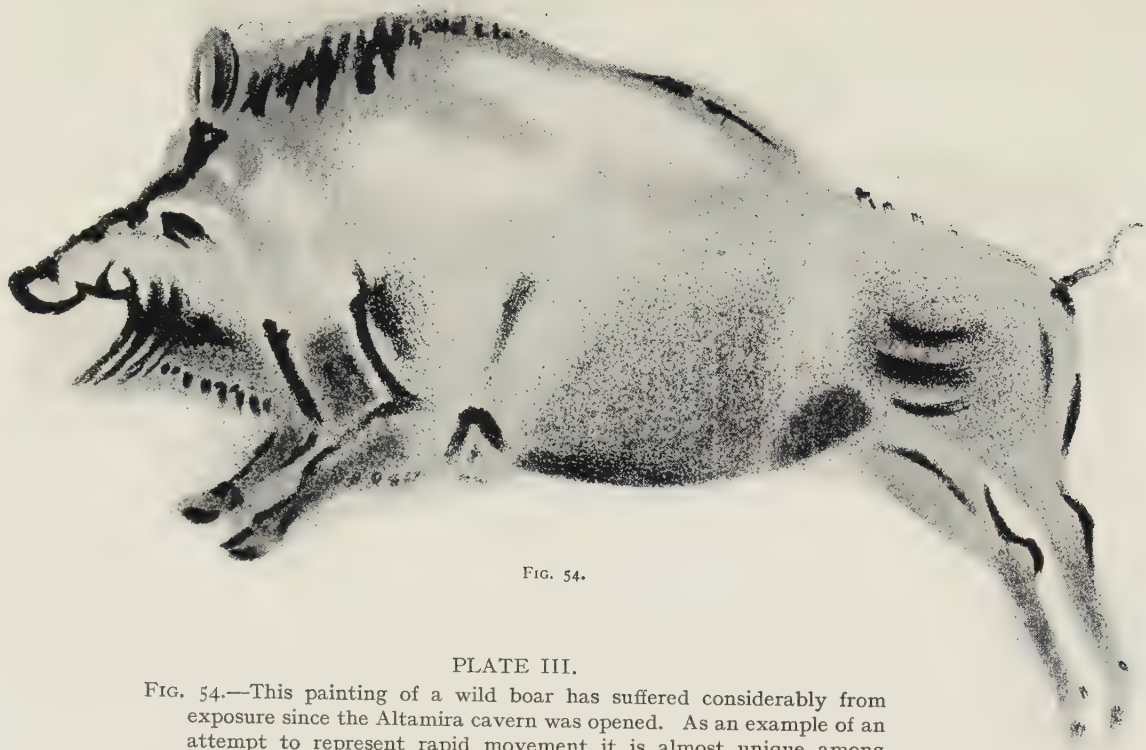

Fig. 54.

PLATE III.

Fig. 54.—This painting of a wild boar has suffered considerably from exposure since the Altamira cavern was opened. As an example of an attempt to represent rapid movement it is almost unique among palæolithic drawings. Size, about five feet. Magdalenian period.

Fig. 55.

PLATE IV.

Fig. 55.—The process followed here is rather peculiar. The whole background was first coloured red and the wolf was drawn on it in black and toned by careful scraping. It is on the side of a passage in the cave of Font de Gaume. One-tenth of the actual size. Magdalenian period.

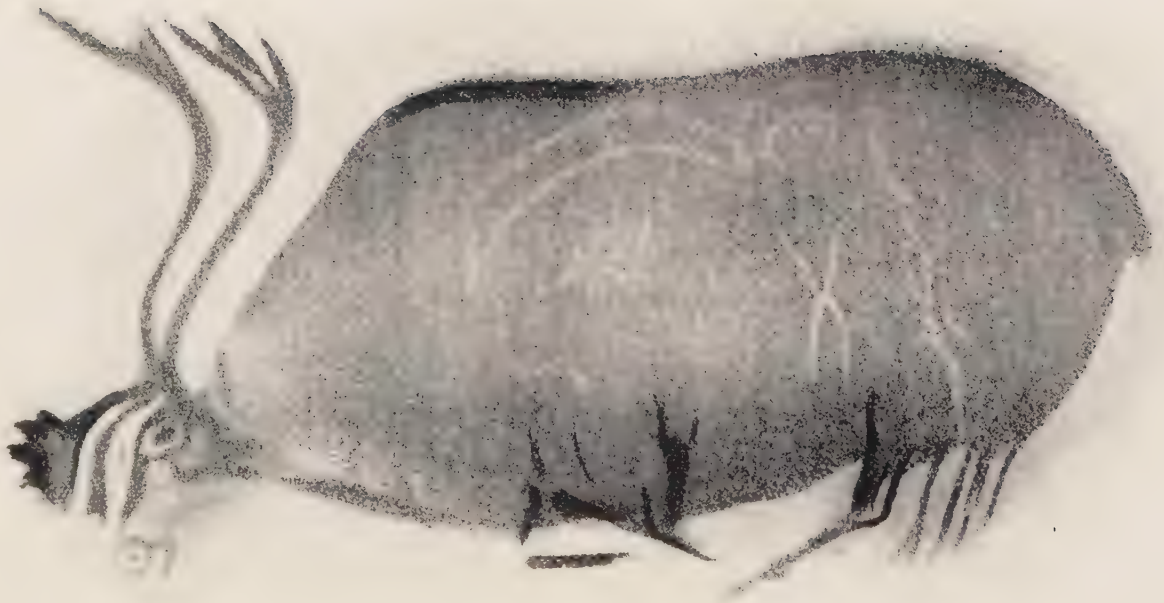

Fig. 56.

PLATE V.

Fig. 56.—Reindeer kneeling down to graze. Another reindeer stands facing it. This is one of the few instances of an attempt at composition. Font de Gaume. One-eighth of the actual size. Magdalenian period.

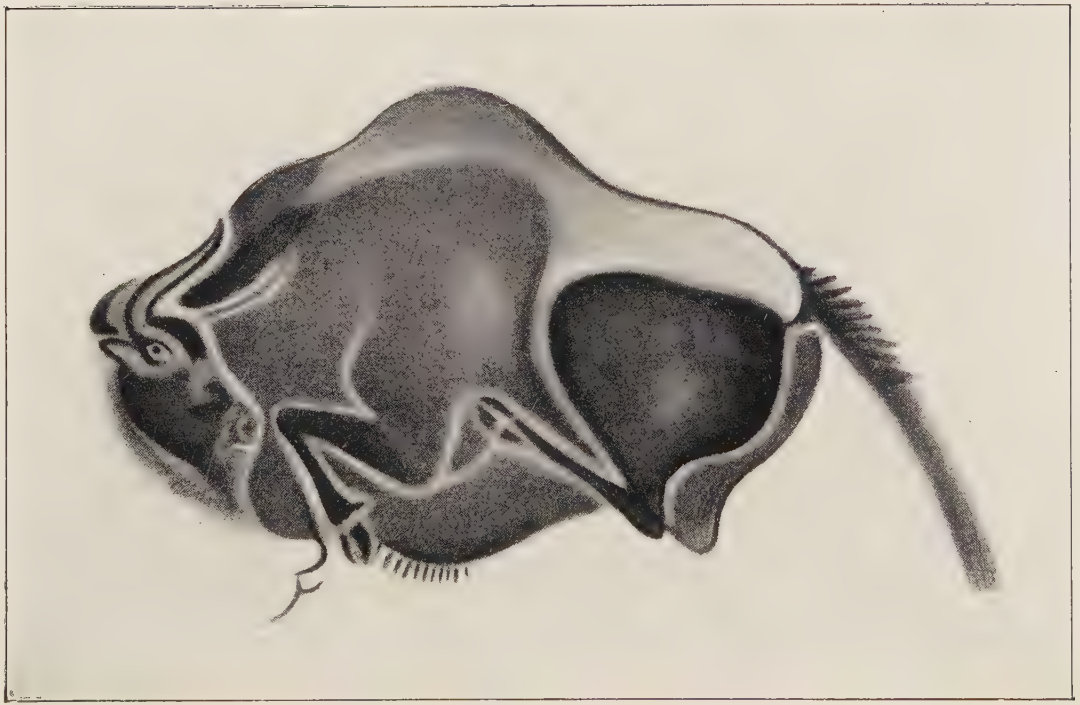

FIG. 57.—There is a certain mannerism in this and in several of the later paintings, as if the artist had chiefly desired to show his ability in overcoming difficulties. The head and rump are cleverly placed on protuberances of the rock, and thus enhance the appearance of relief which he could not successfully achieve by his toning of the rather brilliant red pigment employed in its execution. About five feet. Altamira.

the outline. The whole extent thus mapped out was well scraped so as to expose a clean smooth surface of limestone rock. Then the red, yellow, and brown pigment was laid on, sometimes as a paste, sometimes as a liquid. These crude, even layers of colour were then toned down by scraping and washing, to give the effect of light and shade. Finally the hoofs, horns, and some of the contours were touched up with black (Fig. 53).

Only a few are represented in rapid movement (Fig. 54). The wolf seems to be half concealed, as if lurking in ambush for his prey (Fig. 55), but that effect is due to a stalactitic coating which has blurred his hind quarters. The reindeer (Fig. 56) and several of the bisons, both male and female, are depicted in recumbent positions that would tax the powers of the most skilful painters (Fig. 57). The general result is marvellous, and would do credit to an artist working under the favourable conditions of the present day. It seems almost incredible that primitive man should have been able to paint such good pictures in such a difficult position, in such a dim light, and with such simple tools and materials.

In the soil that forms the floor of these painted caves were found abundant relics of the daily life of those who lived and worked therein, and also of the dangers they had to face. There are not many of us who, even when armed with modern weapons, would care to attack a grizzly bear at bay. But these men, returning from their frequent and lengthy

expeditions must have often found their caves occupied by tenants much more formidable than a grizzly bear. With their feeble weapons of wood and stone they had to attack and kill those deadly foes, or else abandon the result of all their labours.

In the Museum at Monaco may be seen the skeleton of a huge bear (*Ursus spelæus*) which in bygone days had entered one of the Mentone caves and had slipped or crawled down into a hollow roughly walled off from the habitable part. A few years ago when it was being dug out the workmen found that the skull was crushed in by stones which had apparently been hurled at it from above, and were still lying on and around the head of the great beast. Its flesh had probably given a welcome meal to those brave troglodytes who dared to run the risk of fatal retaliation from their formidable visitor.

There is another striking bit of evidence of the entrance of such animals into these caves even during their fairly constant occupation by man, for not only are numerous imprints of their paws to be seen in the soft clay, but on some of the pictures are found the scratches made by their claws.

Of more immediate interest to us are the remains of the implements used in painting. Although evidence of brush work can be plainly seen on many of the pictures, yet hitherto no brushes have been unearthed. It is possible that one day some very observant and very lucky digger may discover a prehistoric brush, but such good fortune is hardly to be

expected. Of the pigments used we have abundant specimens, and also of the mortars and pestles used for grinding them.

The palettes on which they were set have also been found, and many of them even have traces of paint still adhering to them. To say that the paint was kept in tubes sounds almost too modern, but these tubes were made of bone. Many of them have been discovered containing the finely-powdered ochre or else brown iron ore all ready for mixing. Occasionally solid bits of such substances are found sharpened to a point, so that they could be used as pencils.

One of these rare pencils, now in the Museum at Toulouse, had a hole bored through it so that it could be suspended by a string. The string does not seem to have preserved the pencil from being lost, and this museum treasure has probably been gained at the cost of many tears. It may seem an exaggeration to talk of a man weeping for the loss of a pencil, but primitive races, like children, are easily moved to tears. And probably it was not such a trivial loss to him, for it might take many days' searching before the right substance could be found to make another.

We who are not accustomed to make things for ourselves, but just send out and buy new ones when we lose small articles, can hardly realise the trouble caused to primitive man by such small losses. Those of us who have camped out are perhaps better able to

appreciate it. In such surroundings we soon learn how much the artificial comfort of our ordinary town life depends on the humble workers of whose existence we are hardly aware, although they really form the basis of our civilisation, for without their assistance we should soon relapse into barbarism.

The scarcity of material and the simplicity of their appliances were not the only difficulties with which these ancient artists had to contend. In their caverns they had to work by artificial light. Comparatively few examples have been found of paintings on surfaces that were exposed to daylight, even of that dim sort which penetrates for a short distance into certain caves. It is quite likely that many paintings were made on the rocks outside, but most of them must have crumbled away long ago. Indeed, such decay is even now taking place at Altamira and other caves, where their preservation seems to have been only due to their having been hermetically sealed up and thus kept free from atmospheric influences.

What sort of artificial light they used we have no means of knowing, though hollowed stones have been found, one of which M. Breuil believes to be a lamp, embellished with a goat's head engraved in the style of the period. Some writers have even asserted that the work was done in absolute darkness, because they have found no trace of soot on the roof. It has, however, been shown that soot from the flame produced by animal oils does not last a very long time. It has also been pointed out that lamps like those

used by the Eskimos give off no smoke or soot when properly trimmed.

The awkward position chosen for the pictures must also have been a source of great difficulty. They were often executed in almost inaccessible nooks or narrow passages. Some of the paintings are found on surfaces that seem to have attracted these artists by their apparent unsuitableness. Take Altamira for instance. Imagine having to draw pictures by lamplight on the ceiling of a room in which you could hardly stand upright. Imagine the ceiling as being uneven and the floor covered with irregular masses of rock, then some idea may be had of the task these artists set themselves to accomplish when they started to paint that great herd of wild animals.

And here comes in that strange underlying note of sadness that seems to penetrate so many human melodies. They did not accomplish their task. Many of the best paintings were left unfinished; some indeed had only just been begun.

What was the cause of this sudden cessation? Was it some general catastrophe, a plague, a war, an earthquake? Some day, perhaps, we may find the answer to this question, but hitherto nothing has been found that will throw any light upon this mystery. No later paintings or incisions appear to have been made in the cavern. Then great masses of rock falling from the roof blocked the entrance so completely that not even foxes could resort there. Finally nature put her own great seal upon this

treasure house of art, filling up all the interstices of the rocky barrier with a slow deposit of stalagmite and clay. Thus through all the succeeding ages and through all the changes that have convulsed the world these strange forms of long forgotten life have been preserved in that mysterious tomb as faithful witnesses for the struggling nations of to-day, that art is not the submissive handmaid of accumulated wealth, but can flourish under conditions that would seem hopeless and miserable to the sordid worshippers of mere material luxury.

CHAPTER IV

WHY DID THE CAVE MEN DRAW?

What was the object of the cave men in making all those drawings? I think we may at once dismiss as untenable the idea that they were merely meaningless diversions, helping to pass away the unoccupied hours of a race of nomadic hunters. For those who take that standpoint there will be no interest in trying to ascertain the motives which actuated those palæolithic artists. But such an investigation will be necessary as well as interesting to those who believe that art impulses are not independent manifestations, but can be correlated with other forms of mental and spiritual activity.

Of course the first step in such an investigation is to find out whether any existing races make similar pictures, and what are the motives that influence them. Recent publications by the late Mr. G. W. Stow, Dr. O. Moszeit, and Miss Tongue have shown that the cave paintings and rock engravings executed by the diminutive race of Bushmen of South Africa have a very great resemblance to palæolithic work, but unfortunately not one of these authors has been able to give any satisfactory account of the motives influencing the artists, for the race has been

FIG. 58.—Outline of rhinoceros chipped out on stone by South African Bushmen. It is assigned by Dr. Holub to their most primitive stage.

FIG. 59.—Hyæna drawn on hard rock by hammering the surface. Being no longer in outline it is ascribed by Dr. Holub to a secondary stage in the development of Bushman art.

almost exterminated. The miserable remnant, driven from its hunting grounds by the Kaffirs and the Boers, seems to be unable either to make new pictures or to explain the old ones.

In our European caves the lines were cut in the soft limestone by some continuous movement more like drawing, but in Africa the engravings are on very hard rocks, and have been pecked out by a series of repeated blows. The Bushmen, instead of depicting only the head, generally gave the whole body of the animal (Fig. 58), and this was sometimes chiselled all over, not left merely in outline (Fig. 59).

Although the rock is very hard, some of the engravings have been so deeply corroded by weathering that Mr. Stow considered them to have been made at least two thousand years ago. Others seem quite new and fresh. Dr. Holub of Vienna, who studied the subject for many years, and copied a large number of the pictures for the Austrian museums, but published very little about them,[11] thought that he had discovered evidence that the Bushmen art passed through the usual phases of evolution, ending with debasement after reaching a certain culminating point.

Of the paintings some are simple sketches in black, others are polychromes, almost as good as those of Altamira. They differ from the cave pictures in one important particular, for the figures are generally grouped to represent some incident (Fig. 60).

It is rather strange that the habits of the Bushmen should be so similar to those of the cave artists of

FIG. 60.—Rock drawing executed by Bushmen in four colours (black, white, yellow and red), depicting a cattle raid made by them against the Kaffirs who had invaded their country and spoiled their hunting grounds. One-fifth actual size.

France and Spain. This similarity has given rise to many curious speculations. Mr. Stow thought he could trace their migrations from the north of Africa down to the Cape. Professor Sollas, in his *Ancient Hunters and their Modern Representatives* (1911), has discussed the whole subject from a scientific point of view.

This small example of similarity of the two races is perhaps worth mentioning. During one of the last raids of the Boers against the Bushmen, one of the victims was an artist. On his dead body were found a number of little tubes containing paint. They were made of hollowed bones, just like the tubes of the palæolithic men.

In tracing the history of art we shall find many other instances of an artistic race being overwhelmed and dispersed by invaders, who were physically stronger or possessed of better weapons; but is there a single instance of an artistic race going forth to conquer? Strange paradox of fate. The bearers of the light are doomed to death. Dense cruel darkness is constantly triumphant. And yet the light survives and grows.

It is sad that the Bushmen should have left no record of the meaning of their work; perhaps some day we may discover it. Meanwhile we may gain some insight into their motives by studying the habits of Australian natives, or of the Indians of the Arizona desert.

The Australians draw on the ground pictures of

the animals they use for food. Squatting around these pictures they perform incantations which they believe will ensure a plentiful supply. The American Indians carve images of animals, and also draw designs representing rain.[12] In the presence of these emblems they perform several religious ceremonies, and they devoutly believe that thus they can secure an abundant harvest and success in their hunting expeditions.

Perhaps it is hardly right to apply the term religious to such observances, for they arise from a desire to avoid the torments of hunger, not from a fear of the torments of hell. This is only what might be expected from races in the undeveloped stage. They are like children whose chief desire is to obtain food and other pleasant things. The older races are like older men, and their desire is chiefly to avoid unpleasant things and pain.

The images and pictures are an essential feature in these ceremonies; therefore many ethnologists and writers on comparative religion have studied them. The general opinion now seems to be that they are used because they are supposed to give their possessors some mysterious power over the objects represented.

The subject has been well worked out by Mr. J. G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1911), and by M. Salomon Reinach in his chapter on "L'art et la magie apropos des peintures et des gravures de l'âge du renne" (*Cultes, Mythes, et Religions*, 1905).

Magic is one of the earliest forms of religion, and is also a sort of natural philosophy. In a rough way savages attempt to generalise about natural phenomena, and to find out and take advantage of the connection between cause and effect. They notice that if a man's reflection, or picture, as they would call it, is seen on the surface of a pool or river, the man himself must be there to cause it. They notice also that sometimes they can see the reflection although the man may be hidden from their sight. Such reflections are the best and almost the only pictures that they usually have any chance of seeing.

A shadow also is to them a mysterious sort of picture, and they know that it cannot exist without the presence of the object causing it. Reflections and shadows of persons and animals are therefore considered as emanations from them. When they see some other picture having rather the same appearance as the reflection or shadow, is it wonderful that they should consider such a picture as being also an emanation? And is it not almost a natural induction to assume that this emanation can only be caused by the presence of the original subject of the picture? It agrees well enough with all the facts known to them, and it never enters their head to test their induction by experiments or to ascertain any other facts about it. They are quite content to rely on their own very limited experience. Do not many civilised and even well-educated people argue much in the same way, and have just as little foundation for their firm beliefs?

When the belief is firmly held that a picture of a man is an emanation from him and necessitates his presence, it is quite easy to believe that a possessor of that picture must have some power over the man whose presence is thus mysteriously conjured up. We all know how common that belief was, even a few centuries ago, and how learned judges condemned men and women to death on evidence of their having possessed images or pictures of the people they were accused of bewitching. I think that to-day you could find witches in Naples or Sicily who would undertake to kill anybody for you by sticking pins into a waxen image, or by melting it before a slow fire.

Is it any wonder, then, that Australian natives and Arizona Indians should make and prize such valuable aids in obtaining their desires? Of course it is not certain that in ancient days the same beliefs and practices prevailed, but it is a good working hypothesis, and far better than considering their art as mere aimless decoration. This latter explanation is only worthy of those who never trouble to find out "what has been," but only indulge in vague surmises as to "what might be."

Judging by analogy we may fairly assume that the cave men had a firm belief in that form of magic which is now called "imitative," to distinguish it from sympathetic magic. Sympathetic magic requires the presence of something that has touched the person who is to be bewitched. A belief in imitative magic would certainly have incited palæolithic men to make

FIG. 61.—Bison and other animals drawn with black pigment on the side of a cave at Niaux (Ariège). They are very well preserved, being half a mile from the entrance and not exposed to air currents. An arrow is painted on the body of the upper bison, and three are to be seen on the body of the lower one. Size of the largest, about six feet.

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good images or pictures of the animals they desired to have power over. Some confirmation of the theory that they are magic pictures is found in the numerous representations of animals having spears or arrows drawn on them (Fig. 61). If the rock had been soft enough perhaps real arrows would have been thrust into their bodies, just as the mediæval sorcerers

FIG. 62.—Two horses' heads carved in the round on the tines of a reindeer horn. The head carved in relief was at one time supposed to prove that the cave artists studied anatomy. Found in a cave at Mas d'Azil. Early Magdalenian. Now in Piette's collection at St. Germain. Size, six inches. From *Revue Archéologique* (1909), p. 396.

thrust pins or nails into the images of their victims. Further support is given to the theory by the fact that nearly all the pictures represent animals which are good to eat; bears and lions are very rare. It was only natural that most of the men should prefer to leave the fiercer animals alone. They were quite satisfied with pictures which gave them good hopes

of success when pursuing the deer, the bison, or the horse.

Besides believing that pictures give their possessors power over the subjects represented, the modern savage also thinks that they compel those subjects to present themselves in greater numbers. This gives a good explanation of those curious carvings of flayed heads (Fig. 62) which were at one time supposed to prove that primitive artists studied anatomy. It is much more likely that they carved them in that way in order to ensure a plentiful supply of animals, not roaming freely past the caves, but ready skinned for cooking.[13] This may seem a conception too far fetched to be reached by such men, but each single step is fairly logical, and we know to what strange extremes these logical steps, starting from some unproved assumption, may lead even civilised religions.

Admitting that palæolithic man thought that by painting their pictures he obtained power over these animals, yet that hardly accounts for the conglomeration of them in one spot at Altamira, still less for the very numerous sketches of mere heads scattered freely about over the sides of that cave, and of many others too. On the other hand, the theory that they were merely art schools does not account for the rarity of those fiercer animals which are certainly quite as handsome as the others, and might be expected to appeal to an æsthetic taste evidently so highly developed.

I know that it is very rash to offer explanations of a subject so complicated as this, but is it not possible that these art centres of the palæolithic age were very similar to the various schools of art in Italy before the Renaissance? They were not merely schools for the encouragement of art, they were also workshops for the manufacture of pictures for those who wanted copies of known works.

In his *Evolution in Art* (1908), Grant Allen says: "The artist received a commission from his patron for such and such definite work—a Madonna and Child, a St. Sebastian, a Transfiguration—and he produced a panel which resembled in all its principal features similar pictures of the same subject by earlier painters." In the Middle Ages people who gave orders for pictures generally had a religious object in view. They were not merely anxious to possess a work of art as an evidence of wealth, or as a satisfaction of a strong craving for beauty of colour and of form. Of course they were influenced more or less by such motives, but on the whole their patronage of art had a very practical side; they thought it helped them to obtain what they most desired—escape from hell or purgatory. Each age fosters the production of the art most adapted to satisfying its own special cravings. In the days of the Pharaohs an ardent desire for material comfort in a future life led to the construction of durable and elaborate tombs. In modern times the blatant and aggressive individualism which mostly desires the commemoration and glorifica-

tion of itself has led to that development of portraiture so characteristic of the art of the present day.

If, then, each manifestation of art has its special cause or set of causes, it is possible that one of the causes of the development of palæolithic art was a widespread desire for the possession of something that would act as a talisman, and thus assist in the capture of animals good for food. A copy of one of those big pictures in the mysterious recesses of the caverns would appeal to the impressionable minds of such simple folk, especially if the purchase was accompanied with incantations and magic rites performed in front of the life-like original. The copy might be made on the walls of the cave, just as in later times votive pictures were often placed on the walls of the temples; or the copy might be drawn on a separate piece of bone or stone which the purchaser could then take away with him as an amulet.

Such amulets were common enough in Egypt in neolithic times; they generally had holes bored through them for convenience of suspension. A few specimens with similar holes have been found in palæolithic deposits, but the earlier drawings were probably too large to be carried about, and were therefore kept at home.

There would be a large market for such talismans, for the whole population was occupied in hunting or fishing. Agriculture was unknown, and it does not seem as if the reindeer or any other animal had then been sufficiently domesticated to ensure a regular

supply of milk. Success in the chase was a matter of life or death; is it any wonder that men should adopt such an apparently reasonable method of securing it? Charms and spells and mascots are not unknown among the civilised people of to-day.

Possibly the same explanation may be given of those curious bone pendants inscribed with strange marks suggesting written characters rather than mere ornamental designs. It is well known that many letters of our own and of other alphabets are simply degenerate or stylised drawings of natural objects, therefore it is just possible that palæolithic man did use some sort of picture writing. This line of research is still comparatively new, and much careful collating will have to be done before any definite opinion can be given about the meaning of those puzzling signs. We shall see later on that some of them have been proved to be degenerate modifications of animal figures.

It would certainly have been very convenient for a hunter to have a small pendant with marks on it that to him would represent some animal, such as a bison for instance, although to us they might have no more resemblance to a bison than the letters B.I.S.O.N. would have had to him. Such a pendant would have been much less trouble to carry about than a real drawing on a piece of bone or stone. It would also have been quite as efficacious.

We may laugh at these strange devices for ensuring success, but, after all, there was something in them.

For what is a talisman but a sort of embodied hope, causing that state of mind which psychologists call "expectant attention," and which physiologists now allow to be such a help in curing bodily ailments? Would not this state of hopeful expectancy often lead to real success either in hunting or in any other human pursuit? It is not to the despondent that fortune sends the prize.

There is another point which we have not yet considered; it is one which is difficult to prove conclusively, but everything seems to show that in those early days men did not draw from life nor from models, but from memory. Still life subjects seem to have had no charm for them. At any rate we find no attempts to draw trees or flowers, nor even the shells with which they were so fond of adorning themselves, although it might have been expected that such easy subjects would appeal to beginners. On the contrary, they generally choose animals in motion or standing in an attitude of attentive expectation which one feels was preceded and will soon be followed by some rapid movement. One is almost led to believe that objects not in motion made very little impression on their brain. This phase seems to be passed through by the modern baby, and certainly even grown-up people have much more difficulty in distinguishing an object when at rest than when in motion; why that should be is a question for psychologists rather than for artists.

A still more difficult question is the influence of the female on the evolution of primitive art; was the

work ever done to please her? Did she ever do any herself? The influence of the female in art is a difficult and thorny question; I shall have to touch upon it occasionally, but it is a subject that has been little worked at. It would make a good monograph.[14]

Some writers are inclined to look upon art as an effeminate pursuit. According to that view art should flourish more in an effeminate age, and also in ages when women had more leisure and freedom to pursue such a vocation. Whistler even went so far as to represent the first artist as an effeminate man who preferred to stay at home and draw pictures on gourds instead of encountering the perils of the chase.[15] I doubt it. In this instance Whistler seems to have adopted that system of accounting for things by evolving "what might have happened" out of his inner consciousness, instead of troubling to find out what has happened in the past or what does happen in the present. Among modern savages it is not the females nor the effeminate males who do the artistic work of the tribe.

In ancient times the primitive artist was evidently a mighty hunter as well as a close observer of wild animals. He had watched the mammoth trampling through the forest and he had seen the bison stand at bay. He had faced the wild boar's frenzied rush and the onslaught of the wounded stag. And what he saw he remembered, noting the curve of the back and the poise of the head, the firm planting of the

mammoth's massive hoof, the twinkling motion of the legs of graceful deer.

M. Salomon Reinach in his *Apollo* (1906) says that the palæolithic artists succeeded in giving their animals a vivid appearance of being in motion by drawing their limbs in positions which did not appeal to any of their successors until quite modern times, although photographic experiments have now shown them to be correct. This last expression might lead some people to believe that M. Reinach thinks photographic representations to be good standards of artistic accuracy, but that certainly is not the case. He was referring to photographs showing hundreds of positions among which certain ones are similar to those selected by the reindeer men. Now selection is one of the most characteristic faculties of the artist; indeed one might almost say "art is selection," the selection and fixation of phases not seen or not appreciated by inartistic men. Therefore, though a photograph lens may be in one sense an accurate worker, it is not artistically accurate. It does not select. It records a series of positions, some of which give an idea of motion, and some do not.

For we never see objects in motion quite distinctly. A revolving spark gives us the impression, not of a single point of light, but of a continuous circle; the spokes of a rapidly revolving wheel are not visible at all. But an instantaneous photograph would not show that circle of light, and it would show each spoke distinctly. Could it be maintained that the photo-

graph of the revolving spark or of the wheel is really an accurate representation of what is seen by the human eye?

It may seem paradoxical, but the impression of an animal being in motion is really given by reproducing the appearance of those limbs that are almost stationary, the others are not so important. Consider the movement of a pendulum. If you wanted to depict it in motion would you draw it in the position

Fig. 63.

Fig. 64.

of Fig. 63, the position to which it is really moving swiftly, or in the position shown in Fig. 64, when it has stopped moving upwards and has not yet begun to swing down?

Each leg of an animal has a sort of pendulum movement, and, like the pendulum, apparently comes to a momentary stop when the extremity of its stride is reached. The appearance of the leg which has reached this point is fairly easily seized by the human eye. It would closely resemble a picture of it taken

at that particular moment by a snapshot, although two or even three other legs, being in full swing, might have an unnatural appearance. They, however, are not so important to the artist, as they leave a less distinct impression on the human eye.

It is these positions that M. Reinach means, and it was the ability to select and to record such positions that enabled the palæolithic artists to produce such expressive drawings. Look at the legs of this stag, which by-the-bye is erroneously described in some books as a reindeer (Fig. 65). Do they not give an almost perfect representation of the delicate ambling movement so characteristic of the deer tribe?

This excellent but unfortunately fragmentary drawing has another noteworthy feature—it contains one of the few examples of an attempt at foreshortening. The artist has not shirked the difficulty of drawing an animal turning its head to look backwards; considering that he could not use shading to heighten the effect, he has succeeded wonderfully well.

It is not very clear why he filled in the blank spaces with fish. It may have been the "horror vacui," but that explanation reminds one too much of the old phrase, "Nature abhors a vacuum," which used to be given as the reason for water rising in a pump. It is a poor way of accounting for that tendency to fill up blank spaces which is so common in all early forms of art.

In this case it seems probable that the artist intended to represent the animals as crossing or

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FIG. 65.—Deer and fish incised on a cylindrical piece of horn. Found in the Caverne de Lorthet, Lourdes. Now in Piette's Collection at St. Germain. Length eight and a half inches. From an extended facsimile supplied by the Museum.

passing near a river or lake. That accentuation of the presence of water by scattering fish all over it was a common practice with Egyptian, Assyrian, and even later artists. It does not seem unnatural to those who are accustomed to see clear uncontaminated streams filled visibly with an abundance of fish. Those who have only seen the exhausted streams of Europe can hardly believe that any river should be so full of fish that one's mental picture would be as incomplete without them as it would be without the trees or rocks or grass upon its banks.

It is exasperating that such a fine sketch should be in such a mutilated condition; what would we not give for a perfect specimen of palæolithic art! Perhaps some day we may find a carefully preserved hoard of such treasures, well selected and undamaged. A marvellous collection it would be, if we may judge by the broken specimens that apparently were thrown away as useless, or abandoned to decay when their owners migrated to other districts.

For the reindeer hunting race seems to have ranged over a large extent of country, and the various tribes must have had frequent intercourse, otherwise we should not find such a uniform art style all over countries so widely separated as Spain and Switzerland. One small specimen has even been found in England, in the Derbyshire Cresswell cave, but it may have been imported. I am afraid there is not much chance of many more specimens being found in this country, for there have been too many of those

greedy relic hunters ransacking our ancient deposits. They would not have noticed scratched bones, nor have considered them worthy of a place in their collections of "curiosities," but would have left them to decay in the rubbish from their excavations.

In the Kesslerloch cavern at Thayngen, near Schaffhausen, was found this beautiful sketch of a grazing reindeer (Fig. 66). Like so many others, it is engraved, not on a flat surface, but around a short length of bone, which seems to have served as a wand or staff for ceremonial purposes. Several of these staffs have been found in France; they are of various shapes, and have had various uses attributed to them; they have been called sceptres, arrow straighteners, bridles for horses, and even fibulæ for garments. The drawings being on an irregular cylindrical surface, it is very difficult to make an accurate reproduction of them that will really give the effect of the originals. This photograph of the grazing reindeer was made by taking two negatives and joining them together. The "extended" drawing of it (Fig. 67) was made by Dr. Heim.

How careful one has to be to guard against forgeries was well shown when the first discoveries of engraved bones were made at Thayngen in 1874. One of the workmen, with perhaps an innocent desire to please, or perhaps with a hope of reward, obtained some strangely engraved bones and pretended to extract them from the floor of the cave. In those days the peculiar style of the palæolithic old masters was not

FIG. 66.—Like so many other palæolithic drawings, this sketch of a grazing reindeer was incised on a cylindrical piece of bone, so that it was impossible to take it all in at a glance. The observer must have turned it slowly round in the same way that the old rolls of manuscript were turned when being read. Found in the Kesslerloch cave, Thayngen, Switzerland. Probably Solutrian. Now in the Stos-garten Museum. Constance. Illustration taken from "Die Umschau." October 1904.

FIG. 67.—Extended drawing of Fig. 66 made by Dr. Heim. In some of the older publications the engravers drew imaginary tufts of grass beneath this reindeer. Primitive artists of all ages and all countries gave their figures no visible means of support.

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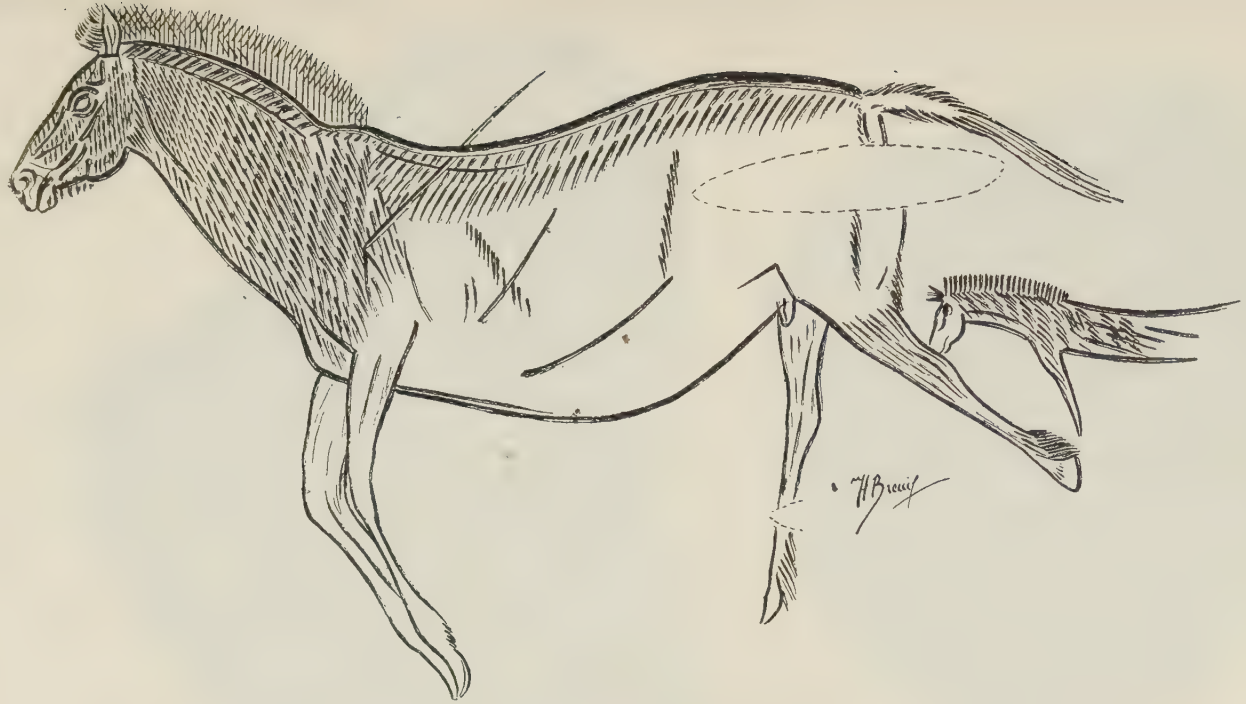

FIG. 68.—Extended drawing of one of numerous figures incised on a carefully polished piece of stag's horn. The dotted line shows one of the perforations usual in these magic wands. The fore legs are bent like those of the horse in Fig. 51. The small incomplete figure has been supposed to represent the spirit or "emanation" of the horse, beginning to come under the magic influence. Truly a difficult subject to express, even in the most advanced art. From the *Revue de l'Ecole d'Anthropologie*, Feb. 1909.

so well known, and the sketches were not recognised as forgeries until Dr. Lindenschmidt discovered that they were copies of the pictures of a bear and a fox given in a child's book about animals. At the present time such forgeries are easily detected, and also it is known that if new lines are cut on an old piece of reindeer bone they have a jagged edge; it was only on the fresh bone that the palæolithic artists could make those clean, firm, unhesitating strokes which are so distinctive of their work.

One of the most perfect of these sceptres, or *bâtons de commandement*, as the French call them, was dug up in 1908 in a rock shelter near Teyjat, Dordogne. It was made from a piece of stag's horn very carefully scraped and polished. The drawings on it—swans, deer, semi-human figures, and horses—are of very good workmanship, but the attitude of the galloping horse (shown in this extended drawing by the Abbé Breuil, Fig. 68) is not so convincing as usual. There is something unsatisfactory about it. M. Breuil thinks that although the fore legs could assume that position in galloping, they could not assume it at the precise moment when the hind legs were in the position given them by the artist—that is to say, he has not synchronised the two pairs. Is it, however, not possible that he wished to represent a wounded horse just beginning to fall? The three long strokes on the body are supposed to represent arrows, similar to those depicted more clearly on the bison in Fig. 61.

Fig. 70

Fig. 71

Figs. 70 and 71.—Engraved stones from Bruniquel (Tarn et Garonne). Magdalenian period. British Museum.

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Sometimes we get quite a false impression by studying only these extended drawings. In a drawing of this sort (Fig. 69), made from an engraved pebble and published in that excellent Guide to the Antiquities of the Stone Age in the British Museum, it looks as if the original artist had made a mistake. The fore legs are depicted as if viewed from the front, and the hind legs as if viewed from the rear. Such mistakes are occasionally found, but not in drawings of so good a style as this one. I have had this photograph (Fig. 70) taken of it to show that the whole animal never could be seen from one point of view only. As you turn the pebble round to look at the hind quarters, you naturally get a rear view of the animal.

FIG. 69.—Extended drawing of the deer incised on a pebble.

These drawings on rounded or uneven surfaces instead of perfectly flat ones are, I think, sometimes due to the desire to get rid of the flat result of unshaded outline engravings. In this sketch of a bison (Fig. 71) the head seems purposely to have been drawn on the rounded edge of the stone, in order to give it the appearance of solidity. In the cave pictures the artists often took advantage of a pro-

truding boss or a natural curve of the rock to give the effect of relief.

Another source of difficulty in studying these drawings is the habit these cave men had of making fresh sketches over the old ones. We have seen that this superimposing was very useful to archæologists in determining the relative ages of the pictures painted or engraved on the walls of the caverns, but on these small fragments of rock or bone it is puzzling or even irritating. Why did they not take a fresh piece for a fresh sketch? There were plenty of bones and stones around. Some writers have imagined that the artists were so thoughtless or careless that, having finished one part of their picture, they drew the next part without thinking about what they had already drawn, and without troubling to keep the figures from overlapping one another. It has also been suggested that it was a rudimentary system of perspective, or of grouping figures together to represent some incident. The Marquis de Vibraye, whose discoveries in the early sixties of last century were so unwelcome to the orthodox disbelievers in the antiquity of man, called one of his specimens a "combat de rennes" (Fig. 72). Those who have seen deer fighting would hardly be inclined to accept that description, but the name still survives in many text-books.

In truth, the old artists seldom attempted to draw groups, or to depict any but the most simple incidents; their work chiefly consisted in making independent pictures of single animals. Grouping, besides being

FIG. 72.—Drawing scratched on a thin piece of schist found at Langerie Basse. It represents a male reindeer following its mate, a favourite subject with the cave artists. Another reindeer is depicted apparently with its legs in the air, but probably the stone was turned the other way round when this animal was being drawn. On the back of the fragment is a very rough sketch of a bison. Natural History Museum, Paris. (From *l'Anthropologie*, 1907, by permission of MM. Masson et Cie.)

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technically more difficult, was not so desirable in those early times, when a picture or a carving was chiefly regarded as a charm or fetish. It would not often be attempted, until the desire was commonly felt for pictures recording some incident or conveying some definite information. This opens up the question of the origin of picture writing, when art sent out a new branch which afterwards developed into the stately growth of literature, a growth that has now overshadowed the fine arts, and seems as if it might in time almost supplant them.

CHAPTER V

SCHEMATISM AND STYLISATION

In a series of open-air paintings recently discovered in a rock shelter at Cogul in Spain there is a curious example which shows one of those attempts at composition (Fig. 73). The subject seems to be a sort of ceremonial dance or procession of clothed females round a man who is perfectly naked, except for some strings tied above his calves. It has been compared with those dances described by Stow [16] in which the principle of fertility or the creative power of Kaang is celebrated. If this should prove to be a true comparison, it would afford another curious commentary on that inversion of ideas which has led people to consider nakedness as indecent.

Several Magdalenian stations and flint implements have been found not far from these paintings, but nothing else to corroborate the evidence afforded by their style that they belong to the palæolithic period. As might be expected from their exposed position most of them are very indistinct; it requires a trained observer to decipher and trace the patches of colour and engraved outlines still faintly visible.

They had always been known to the inhabitants of that remote village, but they were first revealed to

the outside world by an article written in March 1908, by Señor Ceferi Rocafort, in the *Butlletti del Centre Excursionista de Lleyda*, a Catalonian society for encouraging the exploration of that province.

MM. Cartailhac and Breuil soon heard the news, and the indefatigable Abbé made an expedition that same autumn to examine them and some others at Cretas in Aragon. One evening as he was riding back, after a long day spent in copying the pictures, he descried on a rock lit up by the setting sun faint traces of a red figure of a stag, hitherto unnoticed by the inhabitants. Jumping off his mule, he climbed up the slope at the foot of the small cliff, and found not only the red stag, but also a better preserved black one and three small wild goats. Encouraged by this discovery, M. Breuil and his Catalonian friends have made researches far and wide all over the district, and they have succeeded in finding a great number of other painted and inscribed rocks, which will form the subject of an important memoir soon to be published. The Abbé hopes in time to find traces of palæolithic art right through Spain and Portugal down to Gibraltar, and perhaps even into Morocco, thus providing material to decide the question whether European primitive art has any relationship with the African art exemplified by the still insufficiently studied rock engravings at Sus (Morocco) and in various parts of Algeria.[17]

Considerable prudence has to be exercised in making these researches, so as not to awaken the

suspicions or fears of the ignorant and superstitious inhabitants. The frescoes of Cretas had to be bodily removed from the rock to save them from being destroyed by the shepherds, who were annoyed or alarmed by the appearance of strangers in their

FIG. 74.—Stag painted in untoned red in a rock shelter at Cretas, Aragou, Magdalenian period. About twelve inches long. From *l'Anthropologie*, by permission of Masson et Cie.

wilderness, hitherto free from such visitors. The position of these paintings rendered them peculiarly liable to destruction, for they were not, like so many of the cave pictures, hidden away in inaccessible nooks and corners. They were painted as a sort of frieze about eight feet from the floor of a shallow rock shelter hollowed in the side of a small ravine.

The colouring is flat, and no attempt appears to have been made to show by varied toning the articulation of the limbs with the body, but the very uncommon arrangement of the legs, as of an animal just about to rise to its feet, betokens a draughtsman of no mean ability. And yet, like many other artists of much later times, he could not recall a mental picture of horns in profile, he has represented them as if the deer were facing him (Fig. 74).

The technique of these open-air pictures is similar to that of the red and the black unshaded paintings in the Altamira cave, and there are many evidences of their having been executed in successive but widely separated periods. They seem also to have been frequently restored, sometimes even with a different colour; thus they have rather the appearance of real polychrome paintings.

Some of the figures (Fig. 73) are diagrammatic, or to use the newer phrase, schematic, and of such a crude character that they might be assigned to any period—palæolithic, neolithic, bronze, or even iron—for schematism is no sign of age, but only of a certain stage of development. Indeed, it is possible that this system of representing solid objects by a sort of geometrical plan may in time be proved to be always a stage of degeneration from fairly good naturalistic drawing. It is perhaps premature to make generalisations on this subject, as we have not yet sufficient examples properly classified chronologically, to found a good argument upon. It seems,

however, as if one might say that when animals are treated schematically their limbs are represented by a single line, more or less thick, but seldom doubled to form a real outline. We have already seen that real outline drawings are found in the earliest stages, with very little tendency to represent any limbs by single lines, much less by straight ones.

It may be that both systems are inherent in human nature, and that they are only phases of that struggle for predominance between the straight line and the curved, the geometric and the naturalistic, between conventionalism and realism, which has lasted through untold generations, and which perhaps dates from the very beginning of all art.

The schematic drawing of a stag in Fig. 73 is, I believe, the earliest example of that treatment applied to animals. It is strange to see on the same rock, painted in the same colour and with the same technique, a bison drawn realistically, although the man attacking it is treated rather schematically.

There is also a small sketch in black of a man and a bull showing the same contrast of treatment. This sketch and another schematic man below are apparently relics of an earlier picture partly destroyed to make way for the group of large oxen. All this tends to prove that schematic drawing was practised before naturalistic drawing had begun to decay, and even before it had reached its highest point, but that does not invalidate the argument that schematism is a stage of degeneration from naturalism. Symptoms of decay

may be visible in a tree even when it is still flourishing and is producing good fruit.

If the art of naturalistic drawing was developed by the habit of paying greater attention to the main outlines of things (a habit fostered by the things being carved more frequently in "silhouette"), in the same way schematic drawing may have been developed by attention being distracted from outlines. Outlines filled up with colour lose their importance. Correctness of outline form ceases to be the chief aim. General effect is the keynote of the work, and so long as it gives the desired impression, no regret is felt at its shape being more or less unlike that of the object represented. It may gradually become merely decorative, or it may lead to a sort of impressionist art.

In both cases we suppose that the artist worked from memory, and had in his mind's eye only a previous representation of the object, not the object itself. If he had strictly confined himself to copying what was actually before his eyes he might have attained greater accuracy, but his art would not have developed in so many various directions.

If this explanation of its origin is correct, schematic drawing must have begun later than naturalistic. It continued to grow along with it like a parasitic canker until favourable circumstances enabled it to spread rapidly and to supplant its rival.

Reactions have often occurred; schematism has had to retire defeated and naturalism has flourished again for a while, but the contest still goes on.

Why the one should at certain periods drive out and supplant the other is part of that great problem of the psychology of various races in their attitude towards art, a problem which is still far from being solved.

This subject of schematism is closely allied with that of stylisation, which is now generally admitted to be a sort of degeneration, though some consider it only as a stage in the evolution of art to a higher plane.

We have seen that there are many indications, if not definite proofs, that the glyptic arts originated not from a desire for the possession of beautiful or decorative objects, but from a desire for objects which would give their possessor power. You may call them fetiches, talismans, magic wands, sceptres, anything you like, the underlying idea was still the same. That idea survived long after carving had developed into drawing and drawing into writing. Have we not heard of phylacteries, of magic scrolls, of words of power, even in modern times?

The origins of ideas, however, are often wonderfully different from their results, just as the roots of a tree are different from its fruit. The higher the organism the more does the product differ from the original germ. Art and literature may have had their origin in mean and poor desires, but their true function is to ennoble the desires that gave them birth and to lead the world on to the perception and conception of still higher things.

The palæolithic artist certainly fulfilled his duty in this respect. He was not content with the rough fetich that would give its possessor power to satisfy merely sordid physical desires. He gradually improved and idealised it until in the hands of his successors it became one of the most potent instruments for elevating the human race.

This progress was not continuous. There were many sad lapses from the path of duty, many weary years of enslavement to cruel tyrants, many voluntary prostitutions in the temples of false gods.

To trace these vicissitudes would be a task worthy of a great historian. I cannot dare to attempt more than a mere sketch of some of them.

Stylisation seems to herald the downfall of palæolithic art. How it fell we know not. Like other golden ages it may have passed through various decadent phases, but of these as yet few traces have been discovered. In Europe it seems to have been swept away at one fell stroke, leaving no inheritors of its traditions, no scattered devotees to mourn its loss, vainly striving to rekindle the quenched fire.

Symptoms of decay had appeared long before the final catastrophe. Among the successive generations of artists some few had not been faithful. Whilst the great masters still strove to advance along that endless road that leads towards perfection, these traitors only strove to increase their output, regardless of its quality and truth. That pernicious custom of copying

a copy was ignorantly and carelessly followed until the copies lost all resemblance to the original.

Look at this piece of carved work from the Kesslerloch cave (Fig. 75). Technically it is good; as a decorative design it might pass muster, yet who would think that heads of oxen were represented there? The horns and ears are all that are left, generations of copyists have gradually discarded all the rest. The original was probably a fairly naturalistic drawing, but the copyists hurrying over their work and ignorant, perhaps, of the meaning of many of the lines they saw before them, omitted some and quite misplaced the others. It was less trouble to do that than to refer to the actual object it was meant to represent.

The word copyist must not be taken as implying that the artist always had a drawing before him when making his new copy. Judging by what we know of other

FIG. 75.—Split piece of reindeer horn ornamented with three rows of rhombs in relief and an incised decoration derived from bulls' horns and ears. Kesslerloch Cave. Thayngen.

times and of other races, there is every probability that he generally worked from memory, but it was the memory of what others had done, not of what he himself had observed. In time other artists, remembering the drawing he had produced, repeated his mistakes, exaggerating them after the manner of copyists in all ages. And so it went on. The final result was meaningless as a work of art, but tradition and convention still pronounced it to be a representation of oxen. The purchaser was satisfied, and the artist felt no shame.

That, I fear, is the key to the whole question, or at all events it points to one of the chief causes of decline. The artists were not working for love of art, but for gain. The more pictures they could turn out in a given time the greater would be their sordid recompense. Abbreviation became the guiding principle of their work. What did they care if in abbreviating it they made it quite unreal. Their patrons liked it. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and my people love to have it so" was as true then as in the days of Josiah or at the present time.

Of course the motives for making these abbreviations and alterations were not always bad. The desire for decorative effect was an innocent impulse, although it may not indicate lofty ideals. That this decorative effect was generally only obtained by modifying animal forms merely shows poverty of invention, a poverty so constantly manifested throughout succeeding ages that

Prof. O. Montelius felt impelled to say: "Is human freedom really so limited that we cannot make things in whatever shape we like? Are we obliged to pass from one shape to another, step by step, and with but little difference between each of them? Until the relations of one shape to another have been carefully studied one is inclined to reply 'No' to this question. But since people have more carefully studied the wonderful history of human handiwork they find that the answer must be 'Yes.' The evolution may take place slowly or rapidly, but mankind is obliged, when producing new shapes, to obey the same laws of evolution that govern the whole realm of nature" (*Svenska Forminnes foreningens Tidskrift*, Stockholm, 1900, p. 268).

There was also the desire to communicate news, which probably led to the use of abbreviated forms as a sort of picture writing. The evidence for such a practice in palæolithic times is not yet well established. Some authors have even imagined that picture language is older than spoken language. It is difficult to believe that any evidence could ever be found to prove this theory, although when a sufficient number of primitive skulls have been discovered, anatomists expect to be able to fix the period when man began to acquire the power of speech. The abbreviated forms used in picture-writing are often strangely distorted and defective. They have no relationship with those forms that are artistically correct, having been so

intelligently simplified that a life-like impression is given with a few strokes. The sketch of a herd of deer (Fig. 76) is a notable specimen of this art, and shows a remarkable power of seizing the really important features of a subject. It almost suggests that there must have been a sort of impressionist school in those days.

The study of these modifications of designs is quite a special one. It has been pursued by many patient and learned investigators, who have shown that this sort of evolution is to be traced in many other periods and in many other lands. In America some phases of the process were studied by Mr. W. H. Holmes, and the results were published in his *Ancient Art of the Province of Chiriqui, Colombia*. His illustrations

FIG. 76.—Sketch of a herd of reindeer incised on the wing bone of an eagle. Very few sketches of this sort have been found. Dug up in the Grotto de Teyjat (Dordogne).

of the transformations of the crocodile are very curious (Fig. 77). Since then many other American

FIG. 77.—Figures taken from actual designs found on ancient Columbian pottery, showing how a schematic drawing of a crocodile became simplified and then modified into zigzags, spirals, meanders and other patterns. W. H. Holmes in *Sixth Annual Report*, Bureau of Ethnology, Washington, 1888.

writers have traced the evolution of various Mexican and Peruvian decorative or religious designs.

Dr. A. C. Haddon of Cambridge (England) in his *Evolution in Art* has given a most interesting account of the life history of designs, their birth, struggles, conquests, migrations and death. It is to be hoped that he will publish a new edition embodying the numerous contributions to this study that are now only to be found scattered in the pages of various scientific journals. Professor Goodyear in his *Grammar of the Lotus* has made a very elaborate study of certain special forms found chiefly in Egyptian, Assyrian, and Greek art.

A detailed study of the transformations of palæolithic designs is shortly to be published by Abbé Breuil. The following is a translation of the introductory paragraphs of an article, "Figures Dégénérées et Stylisées à l'époque du Renne," written by him for the 1906 Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archæology :—

"The decorative art of the reindeer age had its origin in figures representing natural objects. This is becoming more and more generally admitted with regard to the primitive phases of art in all ages.

"By the side of works of art of a high order we find some drawings not so clear, in fact often unintelligible ; some of them are perhaps symbolical, others may be merely the private mark of the maker or the owner. These designs arranged in series explain one another, and form groups, showing that the principal agent of modification has been a linear reduction due to economy of effort. This has condensed the original

realistic figure into a drawing made with a few strokes.

"The limitations of the space available, and a natural desire for symmetry and rhythm, have also frequently contributed to make an artist modify the design which he was copying or which he was reproducing from memory."

The most interesting of the modifications traced by M. Breuil are those which led up to the spiral pattern, that very important factor in the history of decorative designs (Fig. 78). It used to be credited to the Egyptians, as it had not been discovered on anything older than the scarabs of the fifth dynasty. But M. Piette's specimens are undoubtedly palæolithic.[18] It may be that the Egyptians inherited their spirals from races whose relics, when discovered, may show that they were connected with the cave-men of Europe. On the other hand it may be that they invented it independently. The idea of independent genesis at various times and in various localities, as opposed to the monogenesic theory, is gaining ground in art as well as in other subjects. Just as we have given up the belief in a common ancestor of the whole human race, we are being gradually forced to give up the belief that all art work had its origin in a single source. Dr. Haddon traces the spiral patterns seen in the carvings of the South Sea islanders to the guilloche, and the guilloche he traces to modified heads of frigate birds, the beak of one bird helping to form the head and eye of the

FIG. 78.—Evolution of the spiral from stylised pictures of bulls or bison, according to Prof. H. Breuil. Bucrania (representations of bull's head and horns, or in later times the skull and horns) have been considered as magical or sacred symbols for countless ages and in all parts of the world. See Note 19. *A*, *C*, *D*, drawings on schist, found at Bruniquel, now in British Museum. *B*, from Font de Gaume. *E*, Raymonden. *F* and *K*, Lourdes. *G*, Le Placard. *H*, Maszyckuttöhle. *I*, Laugerie Basse. *J*. Cambons.

next. Mr. Edge-Partington, however, believes that in a neighbouring district lizards' tails have given the original motive (Fig. 79).

We shall see many more instances of these modifications as we turn over the leaves of unwritten history. We shall come to times when life itself was not so simple

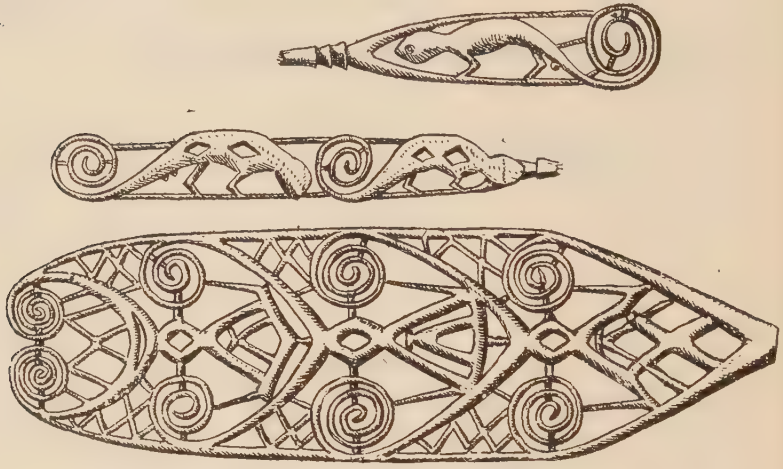

Fig. 79.—Handles of wooden spatulas carved by inhabitants of the Matty islands (western Pacific), showing another source of the spiral factor in ornamental designs. About one-third actual size. Now in Mr. Edge-Partington's collection.

and motives were more mixed. As different races progressed at different rates and formed schools of art of varying degrees of excellence, the lines of development became more complicated. Intercourse between nations at various stages of culture produced cross currents and strange reactions which influenced the growth of art, and render the study of it much more difficult.

It is fortunate that we have sufficient specimens of palæolithic work to be able to form some conclusions as to the evolutions of the art of a race free from contact with any outside world, and living in a period when the problems were comparatively simple.

One word more ere we leave this region where the shadows made by primitive men flit before us. Occasionally we find a certain class of people—quite clever people too, and fluent—who belittle the pioneers of knowledge and wonder why men did not find these things out before. Not comprehending the complexity of nature, they declare that these inventions and discoveries are very simple and very natural, and are only just what might have been expected.

For instance, when it comes to a question of the origins of art, they say that modern children can often draw fairly good pictures, then why should primitive man not draw equally good ones? People in this frame of mind miss the real result of the investigations and discoveries I have been trying to describe. They do not realise that the power of artistic expression possessed by some children is due to inheritance. We need not enter into the thorny question whether it is possible to inherit acquired faculties, such as skill in drawing, but it certainly is possible to inherit products of that skill and traditions of the methods invented by those who produced them.

If we could find children who had never seen a drawing and yet could draw fairly well, we might then be justified in saying that these palæolithic art pro-

ducts were merely what might have been expected. But those who have made a study of children's drawings say that all except the very crudest are the result of observing and remembering the drawings of other people. A child's skill consists in utilising the methods of drawing invented by his predecessors. His results do not prove independent invention, any more than wonderful results in mental arithmetic would prove that he had reinvented the multiplication table. One would not say that because many young children can read and write, therefore the invention of an alphabet was simple and natural and merely what might have been expected.

Dr. Kerchensteiner, who has made elaborate studies of the growth of the artistic faculty in children, and has classified more than three hundred thousand specimens of their drawings, believes that imitation is such an important factor in artistic development that if a Japanese child were brought up in Europe he would draw in the European style, and *vice versa* a European child brought up in Japan would draw in the Japanese style. In other words, evolution in art is conditioned by its environment; it is not personal but communal. This sounds rather like Socialism applied to art, and reminds one of that commonly ignored declaration, "Ye are all members of one body; if one member suffer the other members suffer with it."

Perhaps Dr. Kerchensteiner does not make enough allowance for inherited tendencies, but that is a question which is too complicated to be discussed

here. M. Salomon Reinach, referring to the persistence and tenacity of life of the celto-scythic or La Tène style, says: "If classic art were to fall into oblivion to-morrow, it is the style of La Tène which would take its place as a spontaneous product of the national temperament that does not change any more than the character of an individual changes" (*La Sculpture avant les influences gréco-romaines*, 1896).

When national tendencies are inartistic their development is simple and not very interesting except to archæologists. It is very different when we come to study the history of nations with artistic tendencies and try to trace their struggles to become articulate and give expression to their vague perceptions.

The belief that it is simple and natural to express mental conceptions pictorially is as ill founded as the even more prevalent idea that it is easy and natural to speak the truth. Both beliefs are a species of superstition due to ignorance, especially the ignorance of the inexperienced, of those who have seldom tested their capacity for doing things, but have been contented with merely talking about them. Perhaps if it were more generally recognised how hard it is to speak the exact truth either in words or pictures, there would be less readiness to circulate false accusations by well-meaning people, fewer harsh condemnations of rash attempts to strike out new lines in art.

Mankind usually takes the line of least resistance. It is so much easier to detect faults than to detect beauties that we are always more ready to blame

than to praise. If we would only make experiments for ourselves we should realise the difficulty of ascertaining and expressing the exact truth about even the simplest things. We should then be more ready to appreciate the difficulties of pioneers in any branch of human work, and instead of wondering why man has made so little progress we should be filled with astonishment that he has progressed so much.

Indeed, no growth or progress is simple and natural in that limited sense which is so often given to those words. It is all marvellous, and the greatest marvel of all is the upward progress of man. One of the weakest and most defenceless of animals, he has dominated all the rest. He has achieved this conquest by slowly but surely adapting material things to serve as his instruments. Man is the only tool-using animal. That adaptation of lifeless things to ease the toil of life for all mankind was a great step in advance. It was the decisive step which first placed him on the road to knowledge, a road which has, however, not often been traversed by great leaps and bounds. In fashioning tools for subduing his fiercer and stronger competitors he improved his faculties of observation and memory, besides adapting his limbs to execute strange and subtle movements, but at first the improvement was not rapid.

The more we study the history of the past the more deeply are we impressed by the painful slowness of his progress. What seems simple and easy to us, looking back along the road he travelled, was to him

most difficult and perplexing. We need not enter here into the question of the inheritance of manual dexterity. It is quite enough for us if we realise that in his mind there was but little light of past experiences, and he was faced on all sides by the darkness of the great unknown.

Can we wonder that his leaders felt their way with halting steps, painfully and slowly climbing upwards, cruelly struggling with their companions, blundering and sinning against all the rules that now we think self-evident?

Let us not underestimate their difficulties: considering their successes as natural, their failures as ridiculous. When it is our turn to be judged and future generations estimate our work, will they not wonder that we were so slow in solving the problems, artistic, social, religious, that still loom darkly ahead and seem so terribly insoluble although we have the light of millenniums of past experiences to help us? Will they have sympathy with our efforts, or will they find no words strong enough to condemn the cruelty, the blundering, the sinfulness of those who lead us now and cannot always lead us well?

CHAPTER VI

AFRICAN AND SIBERIAN ART

Palæolithic man, with his acute artistic perceptions and his simple manner of life, disappears from our ken. For a while all is darkness and uncertainty. We can imagine vast migrations, terrible invasions, fierce struggles and horrible slaughter. Or there may have been the silent death by pestilence or famine. But of these catastrophes we have no proofs; the pygmy race seems to have disappeared entirely from Europe, the others are more difficult to trace. The negroid element may have gone south while those of Eskimo type went north. At present we know nothing except that the whole region where these cave artists flourished became artistically a wilderness, a wilderness in which no great original art has ever blossomed forth again.

Of cataclysmic changes of the climate or the surface of Europe we have also no evidence; on the contrary, towards the end of the palæolithic period the European climate seems to have settled down, after several minor variations, into its present condition. It is quite certain that no very great geographical changes have taken place since a much more distant date.

With the exception of Great Britain the various countries of the world had long been separated from one another by the same mountain ranges, drained by the same rivers, and bounded by the same seas; in fact, the stage had been cleared and arranged for the unfolding of the great human drama, the drama of which I am trying to describe some episodes. A connected narrative is impossible, the record is

Fig. 80.—Very large figures of Bubalus, about six feet in height, incised on rock at Er Richa (Oran). The series of drawings extends for about a hundred yards. It contains elephants, horses, and faint traces of a man. They are not easily recognisable except in certain lights.

too scanty, and of that scanty record all too little has been read.

The centre of interest now shifts to Africa; the part my actors have played there will seem more of the nature of an interlude than a continuation of the original story.

The drying up of the great Sahara Sea had already improved the climate of Europe, producing dry warm winds, and thus driving back the long victorious ice from its outposts on the central moun-

tains and the Pyrenees to its original fastnesses in the north. Among the mountains on the edge of that receding sea of inland Africa wandered a nomad race of whom we know almost nothing. They hunted the now extinct bubalus (Fig. 80), a sort of buffalo, and left drawings of it and of other animals indelibly impressed upon the barren rocks that line the ancient water-courses or rise gaunt and jagged from the burning plain—a plain still scattered with shells of innumerable ostrich eggs, although the ostrich itself has now retreated to more hospitable climes.

Some of the pictures are painted; the colour is laid on evenly all over, without any variety of tone, in this respect resembling some of the cave pictures, but the material used as pigment is said to be very different. Capt. Maumené believes that instead of iron ochre and other minerals they used a vermilion and a reddish-brown vegetable stain which has sunk into the rock to a depth of several millimetres (*Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques*, Paris, 1901).

If that is the case it does not seem likely that the paintings can be very ancient, for vegetable stains are not very permanent.

Most of them, however, are engraved with outlines of various depths, not more than five millimetres. Some are in slight relief, others were made by hammering the whole surface so as to form a contrast with the surrounding rock.

This latter process was also employed in Egypt

in prehistoric times, but that does not enable us to draw any conclusion as to the date of these African pictures. In fact, as Professor S. Gsell says in his *Monuments Antiques de l'Algérie* (1901), "the chrono-

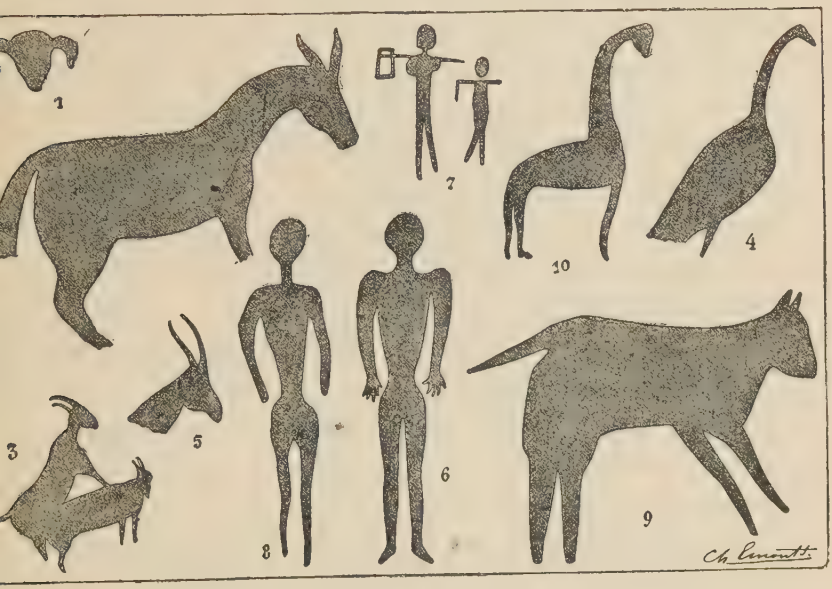

Fig. 81.—Figures found on the rocks at Oued Safsaf, Geryville (Algeria). There seems to be some uncertainty as to how they were executed. Capt. Maumené says that they were painted with the vermilion juice of a shrub. Prof. Breuil thinks the material was red ochre, and M. Flamand thinks the colour is due to the surface of the rock having been scraped to show the unaltered stone beneath. One-sixth actual size.

logy of the rock engravings of Algeria is still absolutely uncertain."

Vast caverns honeycomb those rugged mountains, but very little systematic exploration of them has been attempted. Some day, perhaps, caves or rock shelters

will be discovered similar to those French ones filled with well-defined layers and the relics of successive occupiers. Many specimens of neolithic weapons have been found, but chronological sequences cannot be proved from isolated specimens.

The picture of a man wielding an instrument which is supposed to be a neolithic axe (Fig. 81) would be more conclusive if we knew what stage of development Algeria had reached in early Egyptian, Mycenean, or Carthaginian times. All we can now say is that the pictures have every appearance of extreme age both in their condition and in their style. Schematic figures are found occasionally, but there is nothing to show whether they are older than the others or of more recent date.

The human figures are as crude as those drawn by the reindeer men, another proof perhaps that primitive artists drew from memory, not from models. For if they had been in the habit of sketching from life, would they not have drawn the human form more frequently and more correctly? Surely their fellow-men and women would have been more available as models than the mammoth or the bison, or even than the roaming deer.[19]

In a rock picture at Kef Messouier there is a striking example of the tendency to give a full face view of the head of an animal whose body is in profile (Fig. 82). It is a tendency which seems natural enough, but it is nevertheless absent from purely Egyptian art, though it is recognisable in palæolithic

work (Fig. 78, *a*) and was common in the primitive art of Chaldea and of Greece. In their more advanced art the lion was often depicted in pure profile (Fig. 256) by the Chaldeans, but in Greece the convention seems to have become established that the leopard should be represented with the face in full view (see Figs.

FIG. 82.—Part of a group of ten figures incised on rock at Kef Messouier (not far from the old Roman town Kalama, now called Guelma, Algeria). Size not stated by Prof. Gsell, but he tells me that M. Flamand will give all such details in a large work he is preparing on the rock engravings of North Africa.

384 and 387). This convention persisted through mediæval times and is still maintained in North Africa by the local potters. M. Ed. Pottier in an article ("Histoire d'une bête") in the *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, 1910, p. 419, has traced the occurrence of the type in various periods. He gives illustrations of it taken from strange sources, a glazed Byzantine paving tile, the carved capital of a Gothic church, a

piece of Rhodian faience ware, and finally this modern bowl made recently in Tunis (Fig. 83). He does not include the animal in Fig. 82 among those in his list, though possibly that drawing is one of the remote ancestors of this strangely persistent type. Although the pose of all the animals in this rock picture is so remarkably good and the outlines so firm and definite, the African artist has given them only one fore and one hind leg each. We found the same characteristic in the earliest drawings of the cave men, where indeed we might have expected it, but it does seem strange to find such crude treatment of those limbs by a man who was evidently a very capable draughtsman. The composition, too, of the group is simple and effective, and in the slanting of the victim's body and of the panther's crouching mate there seems to be an attempt at perspective. Altogether it is an extraordinary picture.

The group of elephants attacked by a lion (Fig. 84) is perhaps not so well drawn, but it introduces a new element. The mother elephant stretching her trunk protectingly over her calf is a touch of nature which we have not yet seen. Among all the thousands of palæolithic drawings, I cannot remember even one showing a mother with her young. The mental picture formed in this Algerian artist's brain was no longer a mere crude imprint of the shapes of animals that were good for food. It was of a better type than those violent impressions of the forms of man and beast striving for the mastery. It was a perception of that nobler

FIG. 83.—Common earthenware vase made for local use at Tunis. The tradition that this sort of animal should be drawn with a full-faced head has perhaps been handed down in unbroken descent from neolithic times.

FIG. 84.—Group about twenty-five feet in length incised on a soft red sandstone cliff near Geryville, Eastern Algeria. The thick black mark is a natural fissure in the rock.

feeling which is developed only in the higher animals, and which has been such a potent lever in raising the whole human race from the dead level of instinctive selfishness to those higher planes where courage may be combined with self-sacrifice and love. First manifested in the female, is it a wonder that in the female mankind first saw personified the godlike virtues repugnant to its nature and yet compelling worship? Wherefore the old cave men fashioned their female images, and through all the ages and still in all the world adherents of that faith are found. A faith irrational, perhaps, and inexplicable, but none the less a living faith which still may lead to higher forms of life.

We must now pass from burning Africa to cold Siberia. There we shall witness another interlude giving us glimpses of a civilisation which is extremely difficult to correlate with others.

Near a place called Basaika, in the valley of the Jenesei, a Russian archæologist, M. Savenkov, found traces of a settlement occupied by stone implement users. Carefully following up these indications he discovered the skeletons of two full-grown persons. Reverent hands had laid them in their shallow graves, had carefully turned their heads towards the east, and had surrounded them with some of their worldly treasures, hoping possibly that thus those departed spirits might enjoy them in that future state concerning which barbarian men fancy they possess such detailed and such trustworthy information. Should we despise

these poor rude relics of an ancient belief in the certainty of a future life? They are perhaps the earliest records of mankind's awakening to the idea that all was not finished when his body had returned to the dust from which it came.

To acknowledge absolute ignorance is a hard and bitter confession for a man to make. It was not until the riper ages that anyone dared to frame, even in his inmost soul, that saddest sentence, "I do not know what happens after death." But as the confession of ignorance is the foundation of all learning, and to become as little children is the condition for entering into the kingdom of heaven, may not acknowledged uncertainty grow into a belief that our present interval of consciousness on this small earthly speck in the vast organisation of the universe cannot be our last? It is a belief which will be stronger and better by the absence of all fantastic details.

It is of course very difficult to be sure of the relative age of such isolated deposits. No news of any further discoveries in that district have yet reached the outside world, though it is twenty years since that first discovery was made. Things move slowly with the Russians; like the Spaniards they seem to have the desire to put everything off until to-morrow.[20] Perhaps that is not worse than our desire to crowd too much into our lives, striving to do to-morrow's work to-day.

As far as can be gathered from a rather meagre account of M. Savenkov's discovery, which was read before the Académie des Sciences of Paris in 1893 by

Baron de Baye, the general characteristics of the graves were neolithic. The bodies were buried in the contracted position, lying on their left sides with the knees drawn up; a position which was customary in many other countries during their neolithic stage of civilisation (see Fig. 125). The stone weapons buried with them were finely polished, not merely chipped into shape as in palæolithic times. Several figurines of stone or clay were found, but they are not described in the memoir, and I could not obtain any satisfactory information about them either from Moscow or from St. Petersburg.

Two interesting illustrations are given of carvings in horn of the female elk; one of them (Fig. 85) shows plainly her curious flat hoof adapted for traversing the snow. The makers of these carvings seem almost to have inherited the traditions of the old cave men of France; if that were so we ought in time to find traces of their migration across Europe.

An illustration is also given of a rude human figure. It is archæologically interesting because of a curious incision in the breast. Artistically it resembles the early attempts made by men in neolithic periods in many other regions, and is far inferior to most palæolithic work.

It may be as well to note here that the terms palæolithic and neolithic should, strictly speaking, only be used for stages of civilisation in each individual country, not for indicating successive periods of time. Some writers have unfortunately got into

the habit of using that expression, "the palæolithic period," to denote those centuries or millenniums during which the mammoth and reindeer flourished in south-eastern Europe, regardless of the fact that during those centuries some nations may have reached a yet higher stage, and others may have

FIG. 85.—Female elk carved in bone, found near Basaika, Eastern Siberia. About half actual size. The two straight lines on the body are only the strings by which the specimen is fastened to its support.

still been in a lower one. It is as misleading as if historians were to talk about "the republican period" without warning their readers that they only meant the republican period of the particular country in question.

Rough stone implements of palæolithic type have

been found all over the world, even in China and America. They are attributed to men who lived thousands of years ago, but there is nothing to show that they were made or used at the same period of time all over the world. It is unlikely that we shall ever be able to give even approximate dates for all those periods, but some day it may be possible to draw up a list showing their chronological sequence.

For instance, if in several places in Europe there were found palæolithic sketches upon bone of mammoth or of reindeer along with predynastic Egyptian relics, we could put down these two periods as contemporaneous. If similar relics were always found below the sketches (which is, however, extremely unlikely), the palæolithic civilisation of Europe might then be considered as being of later date than the predynastic.

In all these investigations the study of the characteristic developments of art will be most important. When we consider that only thirty years ago hardly any of these discoveries had been made in France and Spain which have lately provided so much material for such a study, there is reason for hoping that it will not be many years before signs of artistic life in palæolithic times will be found in many other countries.

Of the neolithic or polished stone implement stage much more is known, and it is now well recognised that certain nations were still in that stage at a date when other nations had long emerged from it. In

fact there are even now nations or tribes which are still living in that stage. I myself narrowly escaped dying in it when some savages armed with obsidian-tipped arrows killed off most of the other whites. They also used arrows tipped with small pieces of hoop iron, which had been imported from the outside world as valuable articles of barter.

The difficulties both of travellers and of archæologists would be much less if importations from nations of a higher degree of civilisation were unknown. It is unpleasant to find a savage aiming a repeating rifle at you. It is also unpleasant for an archæologist who has been contending that certain deposits belong to the stone age, to find that his adversary has discovered various bits of metal in those same deposits. It is all very well to say that they were imported; how is that to be proved? Finds of small pieces of copper in neolithic houses and graves have now become so frequent that some archæologists are almost beginning to doubt if there ever was a neolithic age—an age of polished stone-users absolutely ignorant of copper. Late neolithic is now often called chalcolithic.

There is a good deal to be said for that rather heretical view. A race of men who had the patience and skill to grind down and polish hard stones to such shapes both of weapons and of ornaments, as we find in many so-called neolithic deposits, could hardly have been unable to produce and to manipulate such an easily worked metal as copper.

This is rather an archæological than an art

question, still it has to be taken into account when trying to distinguish the various periods of artistic development. Also, as we have already seen in the case of the bone-carvers, the material upon which and with which men have to work has a great influence upon the style of work they can produce. We must know what materials were available if we want to judge them fairly. If the Greeks had not been able to obtain abundance of good marble would they have produced such noble statues? If the mediæval architects of northern France had not had such profusion of fine grained Caen stone, could they have constructed such beautiful cathedrals? With man, as with the rest of the organic world, it is largely a question of environment. And yet the best environment does not in every case produce the best results. Unless the seed is there the richest soil may still remain unfruitful. What hidden factors are there in the life of man that lead some races to contribute to the welfare of the world while other races seem to exercise no influence at all? Among these hidden factors the most potent are the ideals with which each nation is imbued. The ideals of old nations were often made articulate through the medium of their art. Many long-forgotten results of the struggle to become articulate are now being brought forth from their silent graves. Let us examine these results; perchance we may discover that they have a message for the nations of to-day.

CHAPTER VII

THE EARLIEST EGYPTIAN POTTERY

The knell of early art in Europe had long been rung; the body had been buried, and the slow operations of nature had sealed the tomb. Shall we say those artists lived in vain?

A mere faint ghost of their delight in colour and in form seems to have hovered round their former haunts, taking expression in curious painted pebbles daubed with spots and streaks of red or brown. They were found in that cave at Mas d'Azil from which so many palæolithic carvings and drawings had been obtained. No satisfactory explanation of their purpose has yet been given. Of the men who painted them we know too little, their relics are so scanty.

Troops of shadowy migrants pass across the unilluminated stage, now dwelling for a while in favoured places, then wandering further on, ousted by other hordes; wave after wave pouring, it seems, from out the ruined East. For those very causes that led to the drying up of the Sahara sea and the melting of the great glacial covering of middle Europe, seem also to have burnt up the once fertile lands of central Asia. The great Tells of Persia, the innumerable Kurgans of Turkestan, the buried cities of Khotan,

all testify to successive periods of desolating drought which have transformed those once populous regions into the most terrible and lonely deserts in the world.

Unfortunately there are few who care to face the danger and expense of making excavations in such sterile and abandoned regions, but those few have reaped a rich reward. Not the rich reward of gold and diadems with which some forty years ago Schliemann dazzled the eyes of an incredulous world, and with which Egyptian explorers have roused the fatal cupidity of curiosity mongers. These brave adventurers of science have only discovered chipped flints and broken potsherds, mutilated statues and strangely engraved seals. Certainly they did every now and then come across a golden statuette or fragment of enamelled jewellery. It is chiefly these finds that are recorded in the daily papers and described as valuable relics of antiquity, although such rich ornaments do not necessarily appear valuable to students of history or of art.

The flints and potsherds of central Asia, however valueless they may be in the eyes of the ordinary collector, may prove to be the keys that will unlock some of the secrets of the sources of civilisation and the origins of various races.

There is no reason to assume that the supplanters of the reindeer men came direct from Asia, or even that their ancestors had come from Asia. They may have been the inhabitants of intermediate lands pushed

westwards by encroaching Asiatics or by a people who used to be called the civilising Aryans.

Whoever they were that peopled middle Europe between the reindeer period and the Roman invasions, they have left comparatively few traces of their art, and the origins of those few traces are vehemently disputed by rival schools. One school seeks to uphold its pure and independent origin; another would consider it only as the bastard product of barbaric taste and Mediterranean influences. The subject has been treated at great length by Professor M. Hoernes in his *Geschichte der Bildenden Kunst in Europa* (1898); but even with the help of the many discoveries which have been made since that work was published, it does not as yet seem possible to arrive at any definite conclusions. See also Dr. Frankfort's and Professor G. Childe's recent books.

Interesting and instructive as these local developments may be, they do not help us much in trying to follow the general history of art. Either they do not begin early enough to be taken as original causes, or else they do not attain sufficient perfection to be taken as good examples of artistic results.

Apart from the art of the reindeer men, which stands alone apparently without forbears and without progeny, there are no traces of any art in Europe which may be considered as strong and early shoots of that great straggling tree of artistic knowledge which has blossomed in so many lands and produced its choicest fruit in Greece. We must therefore turn to other countries to see what artistic growth was

made when neolithic civilisation began to improve the material conditions of the human race.

Some of the earliest of these shoots were apparently put forth in favoured lands like Egypt, where climate and soil combined to give mankind a little respite from his constant struggle to keep himself alive. One is perhaps rather inclined to scoff at neolithic civilisation, to look upon it as a period of mechanical plodding, a stage of improvement in material prosperity but of stagnation as regards artistic development. Recent discoveries, however, have shown that this generalisation is by no means a correct one. It is true that no art products comparable with those of palæolithic times have yet been found, but there are many indications that some nations reached a fairly high level of skill both in carving and in drawing during their neolithic stage. In fact, that stage all over the world lasted for so many centuries or millenniums that there was time for art to bud, to blossom, and to decay in several different regions long before any bronze civilisation had appeared.

The causes of these outbursts of artistic activity are still most obscure, but probably they are due both to racial and to economic influences; it will be well, therefore, to consider the economic changes which must have taken place when the world began to pass out of the palæolithic stage.

Man had previously made one great step in advance when he ceased to obtain his nourishment chiefly from vegetable food, and had learned to utilise the

forces stored up in the bodies of other animals. He thus escaped assisting at one of the slow processes in that marvellous series of transformations whereby lifeless inorganic material is changed first into plant life fixed to the soil, then into animal existence moving freely about the world, and finally into mental life, which has no bounds, but can penetrate the realms of time as well as those of space.

The advance could not, however, be maintained under the then existing conditions. The more he improved his methods of the chase the more he diminished the available supply of food. One branch of the human race therefore took to increasing the supply by domesticating animals, training and breeding them artificially ; another branch trained and bred the useful plants. Both these pursuits required much more constant labour than hunting, and left but little time for artistic observation and execution.

Also as life became more complicated human energies became more specialised, men's interests more divergent and occasionally opposed to one another. The pastoral nomad had little knowledge of the life and labours of the more settled cultivator ; he had no love for fields of waving corn, and probably he was jealous at being debarred from ranging freely over them. On the other hand the tiller of the soil knew little about animals, for they had not yet been trained to aid him in his work.

In Egypt this second branch found a most congenial home. The Nile had shrunk to a mere rivulet

compared with that enormous stream which in palæolithic times had filled the whole rocky gorge hundreds of miles in length from Nubia to the sea. Instead of continuing to deepen its narrow valley, it had begun to fill it up with those thin yearly films of mud which bear such abundant crops, and have thus made Egypt the wonder of the world.[21]

The pastoral branch also may have found good scope at first, but its importance must have diminished as the agricultural population absorbed the narrow strips of land along the river bank which alone would produce food for cattle and for men. At present it is impossible to distinguish the relics of the prehistoric period as definitely belonging to one or the other of these branches, or even to say when the agricultural branch became predominant. Neither have we any trustworthy evidence to show us when hunting ceased to be regarded as weary necessary toil for food or for defence, and became monopolised as one of the chief pleasures of the rich.

Those who have not travelled in Egypt find it hard to realise that, except at the Delta, the habitable part of the country is less than three miles wide, and that, although it is more than five hundred miles in length, it has not quite such a large area as Belgium. This peculiar conformation was of great advantage to the early agriculturists. There was no necessity for making roads, because the river formed a highway accessible to all. And yet that river brought no dangerous

foes upon its bosom, since it was closed by a great cataract at the south, and by difficult sea entrances at the north. Also they had little cause for fear on either flank, for the vast deserts on the east and west prevented any formidable enemy from reaching them. Thus the long narrow valley became filled with a peaceful and fairly homogeneous population, with similar habits, and few conflicting interests throughout its whole extent.

A great change must have come over their lives when they began to have fixed dwellings. Some of their villages have been discovered and excavated, models of the houses have been found in their tombs. We know the unvarying ground-plan of their rooms, and even the position and form of their hearths—round basins of burnt clay, placed in the middle of the principal chamber, the rim moulded to the form of a serpent, the agathodemon, whose head lapped over towards the embers, basking in the warmth and protecting the family that provided it for him.

The rim was also decorated with incised lines imitating plaited work, seemingly an incongruous form of decoration. Perhaps it had some meaning, or at all events some association with past habits or desires, although at present we have not been able to trace it. Plaited work must have been used for clothes, for baskets, and even for bottles for many generations, probably in palæolithic times too, though no clear traces of it have been found in any deposits of those periods. Such light ware was well adapted

for the few household utensils of a nomad race. In many parts of the world baskets are still used in a way that we should never dream of. I once bought from a Papago woman in Arizona a shallow circular basket, beautifully made and almost water-tight,

FIG. 86.—Black earthenware with incised designs derived from the patterns of plaited basket-work. This style of decoration has been found characteristic of the early neolithic stage in many countries, but it does not seem to have been used in Egypt. They appear, however, to have cherished the tradition of it, for one or two specimens were often placed in a grave. It is supposed that they were imported for that purpose. The larger ones are about four inches in diameter. Found at Naqada near Thebes. Now in the collection of Professor Flinders Petrie at University College, London.

decorated too with designs apparently derived from the shape of a stone-headed tomahawk. It had been used as a basin to mix her dough in.[22]

Those who, in various countries and at various epochs, gave up the nomadic habit, soon found that they could use heavier ware, and they began to coat

their baskets with clay to render them more water-tight. In time they discovered that a fire would harden this clay covering, and that they might even burn away the basket-work without spoiling the vessel. Then after many unsuccessful experiments they learned to build up these earthen pots without the basket core, but they continued for a while to make them in the same old basket shapes. When they decorated them it was with designs that were imitations of the patterns of the plaited basket-work (Fig. 86 and Pl. VII. Figs. 87 and 88), because however incongruous they might be, it was easier to copy such designs than to originate a totally new one.

Imitation is one of the most constant and active of all instincts in all animals ; it is the basis of a large proportion of the human actions that are generally imagined to be spontaneous. It dominates all modes of work, in art, religion, trade or politics. An innovator may build upon that basis ; but when he builds he must be prepared to work not only with the trowel but also with the sword. For if a man shall make any great variation from the normal type it is considered by the majority of his fellows as of the nature of a sin.

They are right from their point of view. Although the tyranny of custom is greater than the tyranny of law, what other control is there over vagaries and excesses in domains where laws are yet unknown? Changes are risky and dangerous, the instinct of self-preservation is strong in the ordinary multitude, and

it is as well that none but the strong should dare to pass beyond the limits of old experience. And they must suffer for their daring, even if they succeed before they die. Innovators, reformers, martyrs, all have to pass through fiery trials and to brave the execrations of those whom prudence or sloth or self-interest still keep within the trodden path of imitation.

What wonder then that progress is so slow? What wonder then that it is only after great shocks of material changes that art or any other form of mental activity can burst its bonds and make a forward leap? After great shocks, not during them. Therefore we cannot expect great progress in the early neolithic stage.

Possibly one of the great shocks to neolithic man was the advance of woman from her subjection as a mere drudge, with not much more initiative than a dog or a horse has nowadays, to a position of slight independence as a maker of important articles about which she could use her own judgment without his supervision. For the potter's craft was probably entirely relegated to women by the earliest Egyptians, just as at the present day in many savage tribes it is practised only by the females (Fig. 89).

With the making of pottery came also new ideas as to the rhythm of shape. Men's eyes were soon to be opened to the beauties of simple geometric forms, as expressed in vases moulded by the potter's hands—the potter's wheel was still an unimagined thing.

Fig. 89.—Native Kabyle woman of Algeria making earthenware without the aid of a potter's wheel. The vessel rests on a slab which she turns slowly round with her foot. Reproduced from the *Revue d'Ethnographie,* December 1911, by permission of M. A. Van Gennep.

Fig. 90.—Base of an ancient earthenware vessel found at Moussian, near Sousa. It shows the structure of the mat on which it was built up. Similar impressions are often found in Egypt.

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The full appreciation of these beauties was not suddenly developed. Potters have to wrestle with many difficulties, to make many experiments with various kinds of clay and with various methods of levigating, of mixing, and of baking it. The history of our own potters is a chequered one of achievements and disappointments. What must it have been for those poor women with no previous experience to guide them, no foreign specimens to copy, no instruments but their own hands to collect and mix and shape the stubborn stuff?

Then when with patient care they had wound the long strip of plastic clay round the soft base spread on its plaited mat (Fig. 90) when the ascending spiral, pressed with deft fingers, had slowly formed the curving sides of cup, or bowl, or pitcher, when it had been dried by sun or wind, and had been covered with hot embers and exposed to fiercest flame, then, perchance by reason of injudicious cooling or from some undetected flaw or some bad quality of the material, behold a crack, a gap, a crumbling of the base! All their work has been in vain. The broken sherds go to swell the waste heap from which in after ages the archæologist will dig them up and try to frame the story of their makers.

It would be an interesting "control" experiment to turn over a waste heap from one of our own towns and see what idea it would give of our present stage of civilisation.

The early forms of pottery in Egypt were not

often beautiful, but they had that honesty of purpose which prevented them from being ugly (Pl. IX. Fig. 91). Have you ever seen the potter making pots? It seems so easy on that swift revolving wheel to build up anything you please. You have machinery and tools and everything prepared at hand to help you to express in soft, well-chosen clay the ideal shapes that float enticingly before your mental vision. It is worth while trying it, for you will surely fail. Then you will go forth with more sympathy in your heart and less censure on your tongue for the workers of all ages. Especially will you have a fellow-feeling for the failures of those who in the distant past had to try and try and try again ere with unpractised hands and without obedient tools they could produce any shape that might have any claim to beauty.

Professor Petrie has made a special study of these forms, and he has drawn outline figures of a great number of them in *Diospolis parva*, one of those large beautifully illustrated volumes published for the Egypt Exploration Fund. He estimates that there were more than a thousand different shapes given to vases in prehistoric times, and at least three thousand during the dynastic period.

There was certainly less temptation in those days to repeat the same forms. All the pottery being made by hand, and generally without moulds or templates, it was nearly as easy to invent a new form as to copy an old one. That is to say, the mechanical effort was not much greater, more mental effort was certainly

protuberances with a horizontal[23] passage for the string by which they were suspended (Figs. 128 and 129). This device was used in the earliest times for stone vessels, on which it would be difficult to carve a loop handle projecting freely from the body. For a vessel built up with ropes of clay such a loop would seem to be a simple enough contrivance, but it does not make its appearance until much later in the world's history, and even then it does not seem to have been accepted by the Egyptians. Being so conservative in their tastes they may have preferred the clumsy old stone handle forms.

The development of this art of making stone vases may have taken place in some other country, for apparently it was at a high point when the neolithic people first settled in Egypt. The early ones are chiefly in very hard stone, marble, basalt, and syenite (a sort of granite). They have fairly good geometric forms, though some are so ungainly and unpractical that it is difficult to say why they were made (Fig. 94). They range in size from a few inches to a foot or more in diameter. Their final shape seems to have been given by grinding them down with wet sand or emery and a small stone, much in the same way as hard stones are polished at the present time. Nearly the whole of the interior must have been hollowed out by the same method, for not much inside chipping could have been done with the poor implements at their disposal. Even gentle hammering would have been risky, since they worked even the

large vases down to a thickness of less than half an inch.

The pottery becomes more interesting when it is of sufficiently good quality to receive painted decora-

Fig. 94.—Stone vase, about three inches high, bought in Egypt. Now at University College, London. The face is of the same type as that in Fig. 105, with high dome-shaped head, not well seen in this illustration.

tion ; it then affords one of the best indications of the progress of pictorial art in those early times. In fact we have little else to judge by, as there are very few specimens of painting and drawing on any other material. We must, however, always bear in mind

that drawings on pottery do not necessarily represent the highest attainments of the art of the period.

When a nation has reached a certain stage, the potter is more of a craftsman than an artist; as regards his drawings, he becomes a copier of other men's work rather than an originator.[24] Also there are many limitations of his artistic instincts. Except on the terra-cotta boxes, the Egyptian potter had only a curved surface to work on, and a very small extent of surface too. His range of colour was very limited, and some of the substances he used changed considerably under the process of firing. Therefore it is not surprising that neither in Egypt nor in any other country do we find any polychrome painting on pottery until a comparatively well advanced stage has been reached. These considerations will have to be discussed at greater length when we come to deal with Greek vase painting (see pages 371 and 478).

Drawings of men and animals are not uncommon on the very early ware. They are painted crudely with coarse white lines on a red surface (Pl. VII.). Glazing had not yet been invented. The surface had to be smoothed down by polishing it with the open hand, a pebble, or a piece of wood, and wonderfully well they did it.

The style of the drawing on the white-line pottery is schematic. Animal figures predominate, rendered in a way that is beneath contempt (Figs. 98 and 99). Possibly they are poor copies of poor originals, degraded by frequent and careless repetition. The human

Fig. 95.

Fig. 96.

Fig. 97.

Fig. 87.

Fig. 88.

PLATE VII.

Figs. 87 and 88.—Designs painted on the interior of earthenware bowls. Probably derived from patterns assumed by plaited work. Found at El Amrah.

Figs. 95, 96, 97.—Figures painted with white slip in rectilinear style during the early prehistoric period. Sequence dates 30 to 40. Found at Gebelein.

To face p. 154.

FIG. 98.—Coarse red pottery of the first predynastic period. The animals are so badly drawn that it is often impossible to say what they were intended for. Size of the largest, about nine inches high. Now at University College, London.

FIG. 99.—Part of a small red bowl, decorated on the inside with figures representing a hippopotamus. About half actual size. Now at University College, London.

figures are no better (Fig. 100). They show that dislike of curved lines, and that affection for triangular forms that is so characteristic of certain races or districts, or perhaps only of certain periods or stages of development. We have abundance of scattered evidence on this subject, but a more connected and comprehensive series of examples will have to be collected before any definite conclusions can be arrived at as to the underlying causes of this preference.

FIG. 100.—Coarse red vase (*sequence date* 40) with white slip designs well burnt in. The men are drawn in the "triangular style" adopted by many primitive races of ancient and of modern times. Now at University College, London. Height about twelve inches.

This vase offers us the earliest known picture of men fighting. For the first time we have a representation of those homicidal struggles for supremacy which fill so many pages in the written and in the unwritten history of the human race. At a later period the pictures of kings smiting their enemies, who seldom seem able to offer any resistance, occur with monotonous regularity.

If we had to judge the character of artists and historians only by the evidence of the works they have left us, we should imagine them to be a blood-thirsty race, glorifying greed and cruelty, or palliating it with smooth, smug euphemisms. But in times of barbarism—a barbarism which is still rampant beneath the thin cloak of modern civilisation—artists and historians have not much independence. We talk of liberty, but who is really free to tell the truth by picture or by word? Literature has partly freed itself from ignoble bonds, but the artist who determines to be free from patronage of any sort finds himself in a queer position, not unlike that occupied in former times by the "masterless man."

Let us not blame the artists or historians who proclaim the glories of brute force. Their work is moulded by the social systems of their age; systems unwise perhaps, in that they give so much determinative influence to men rich in material wealth but poorly qualified to guide a nation's intellectual and artistic efforts. How can such faulty leadership be bettered? It is easy to abuse a system; it might be easy to destroy it, but it seems wellnigh impossible to introduce a new one. The social system of a race is like its art, the outcome of its aspirations and ideals. A nation's art can be destroyed by great catastrophes; it cannot be improved except by slow development; is this not also true of the more complex growth of social institutions?

It is difficult and often impossible to be sure of

the relative ages of the various specimens of neolithic pottery found in Egypt, for until quite recently the whole period previous to the early dynasties (about 3400 B.C. according to the Berlin reckoning[1]) had received very little attention, and its relics were quite unclassified. Even at the British Museum a small number of important specimens of this pottery were for years labelled "Miscellaneous Antiquities, chiefly of the Archaic period." Nowadays, of course, they are all properly dated and well arranged. (In Case E of the small Egyptian room.)

We have seen that the various phases of the palæolithic age have been well determined, and definite names have been assigned to them and accepted by the majority of the students of that period. Professor Flinders Petrie has attempted to perform the same service for Egyptian archæologists by classifying the relics of the different ages previous to the historic period under a system of "sequence dates." Instead of naming these various ages after the names of the places where the relics were found, he has allotted numbers to them. Number eighty represents the age of the relics now proved to be most abundant

[1] I have adopted the Berlin (or short chronology) merely to avoid the appearance of unduly exaggerating the antiquity of the objects described in this book. Black letter type will be used for the B.C. of dates previous to 1600 B.C. in order to remind the reader that the system is quite different from that adopted in most of the older books about Egypt and Chaldea. In the works of recent writers the lack of unanimity and of any indication showing which of the many systems still in use they have chosen for their dating is sometimes very confusing to the ordinary student.

in the deposits of the beginning of the first dynasty; number thirty that of the relics found in the very earliest deposits yet discovered. The numbers one to thirty are kept in reserve for possible discoveries of still earlier remains. They are only sequence dates, and must not be taken as expressing regular intervals of time. The period thirty, for instance, might be as long as the periods thirty-one to thirty-five all put together, or it might be shorter than any one of them.

Unfortunately this system has not yet found general acceptance; indeed, Dr. Reisner in his very careful and elaborate work on *The Early Dynastic Cemeteries of Naga ed Der* (Leipzig, 1908) ignores it altogether. Until some agreement can be arrived at on the subject the ranks of the predynastic archæologists are like a mob attacking a citadel. Each one fighting for his own hand may succeed in gaining distinction for himself, or "valuable" specimens for his particular museum, but the advance into the unknown land will still be barred against such a disorganised band of independent explorers.

In the meantime any one taking up a special subject is at a great disadvantage, for he has no means of correlating and comparing the results obtained in different localities by the various workers. There are thousands of vases and hundreds of carved figures scattered about in public and private museums, but it is seldom possible to learn whether they come from the very earliest deposits or from those just preceding the first dynasties. In fact it is often impossible to

ascertain even the name of the locality where they were dug up, for collectors are frequently so anxious to possess unique or rare specimens that they will pay high prices to unauthorised diggers who dare not or will not divulge the name of the places where they were discovered. Such collectors are doing great injury to the cause of science, and it seems as if they were really little better than receivers of stolen goods. Still it must be admitted that those collectors who are experts have some difficulty in deciding whether the conniving at the spoliation of precious deposits is any worse than allowing them to be lost to science by falling into the hands of those rich and ignorant tourists who are mere curiosity collectors.[25]

Of late years the work has been entrusted much more frequently to properly equipped and organised expeditions which are not obsessed with the mad craze for "specimens," but are more intent on extending the world's knowledge of its own history. It is, however, not yet possible to draw many definite conclusions, because the subject is still so new. Even in 1895 Maspero, in his *Histoire Ancienne, Egypte et Chaldée*, p. 49, felt justified in saying, "the primitive generations have left us nothing, or almost nothing." He dismisses the whole stone age in one short sentence, ending up with "these (flint) objects may be less ancient than most of the hieroglyphic monuments." He even tries to emphasise the point by quoting a story told by

Mariette about a modern Arab who used to shave his head with a flint razor, but managed it so badly that he always had to apply cooling leaves to allay the subsequent inflammation.

The old Egyptologists were men of great literary attainments, and did very valuable work in deciphering the hieroglyphs, but too often they were without the scientific habit of carefully collecting many facts before forming any theories. Their attitude towards archæology was very similar to that of theologians in the nineteenth century towards geology. They had always been chiefly concerned with manuscripts and inscriptions, they were therefore accustomed to base their judgments only on the statements and opinions of other men. The observation and collation of material facts were a form of mental exercise in which the majority of them had no experience and but little skill. When the written word, their chief source of information, failed them they helplessly confessed their ignorance or lost themselves in vain conjectures, for they knew no other way of obtaining satisfactory evidence.

The oldest inscriptions were found on monuments and relics of the pyramid builders ; tradition and the writings of later authors confirmed the belief that they were the work of the earliest dynasties. They showed that these kings ruled over a highly civilised and extremely well organised nation. The language was written in characters that were already stereotyped, and its art had also adopted definite formal

conventions which retained their power for more than three thousand years, producing a style that was almost as unchangeable as the hieroglyphic writing. Egyptologists were therefore faced with an impenetrable wall of mystery, over which some of them projected their minds in strange flights of fancy, but none seemed to think of burrowing underneath it.

The myths of the old cosmogonists still enthralled men's minds, evolution was unknown or regarded as a dangerous heresy, and there was a general tendency to represent all forms of life—human, religious, political or artistic—as appearing suddenly without passing through any previous stages of development. Their origin was popularly ascribed to some god, or at the least to some one superlatively gifted man. Egyptian civilisation was therefore regarded as a wonderful phenomenon, blossoming out suddenly and inexplicably, just in the same way as Minerva appeared springing fully armed from out the head of Jove. The few who were not content with this explanation avoided the difficulty by asserting that the Egyptians must have come from some other land bringing their civilisation with them.

About seventeen years ago large areas containing remains of a civilisation differing greatly from that of the pyramid builders were discovered and explored by Messrs. MacIver and Mace, Professor Petrie and M. J. de Morgan, who was then Director-General of the Department of Antiquities in Egypt. M. J. de Morgan, in his *Recherches sur les origines de l'Egypte*

(1896), pointed out that they must be ascribed to a race settled in Egypt long before the kings of the earliest dynasties had begun to rule over the land. This suggestion of a possible evolution was a great shock; but now it is generally accepted that the dynastic civilisation was mainly derived from the predynastic. The latter, however, was certainly affected, at some still undetermined period, by two invasions or infiltrations of foreign races or of new ideas. Its relics are seen to lose their neolithic character; small copper objects are found more frequently and the style of art undergoes two fundamental modifications.

This question of the sources and effect of foreign influences on native art and civilisation is always a puzzling one even when dealing with much more recent periods. It is therefore not surprising that the origin of this invasion is a subject for much controversy, some authorities holding that the invaders were Semitic and came across the Red Sea from Arabia, while others maintain that they were Semitised migrants from Mesopotamia and came by way of Palestine. A few writers deny that there was any invasion at all, or even any infiltration of an altogether different race. They base their belief on the measurements of the skulls taken from predynastic and early dynastic graves, and they assert that the foreign influence was exerted through the trade routes, which are now known to have been numerous and extensive at very early periods.[26]

These are questions that will have to be fought out by archæologists. They will necessitate the collection and consideration of a number of details which may not have any connection with our subject, but will provide a framework for the classification of our specimens according to their relative age. Until this has been done on a much larger scale than has hitherto been attempted it will be useless to try to make many deductions as to the rise and progress of predynastic art. At present we do not even know whether it was in Egypt or in Chaldea that men first began to use metal instead of stone for their ordinary implements and weapons.

CHAPTER VIII

PREDYNASTIC CARVING AND DRAWING

In some of the earliest deposits, considered by Professor Petrie to be about nine thousand years old,

Fig. 101.

Fig. 102.

Bone combs of the first prehistoric period. Rather similar combs are used by women of the Malacca tribes as a preservative against illness. The head of the animal in Fig. 102 may be taken as one of the series discussed on page 139, as it is not in the usual profile position.

there are curious examples of carved objects—combs ornamented with animals (Figs. 101 and 102) and

pendants with human faces (Figs. 103 and 104). The latter seem to show a definite race type, as they have such a high dome-shaped forehead. This is strongly marked in a specimen discovered by M. J. de Morgan in the prehistoric cemetery at Gebelein. The reports of his excavations there are not yet published, but

FIG. 103.

FIG. 104.

These amulets seem to have been suspended head downwards, possibly in order to give the wearers a better view of them. They vary in size from about one inch to several inches.

he has generously allowed me to reproduce a photograph of that specimen (Fig. 105) and also of a pendant (Fig. 106) and of a clay figurine from the same cemetery (Fig. 107). I do not think that on any of these specimens we can base any sound argument about the capabilities of the early Egyptian sculptors. Most of them are evidently hasty work

a *b*

FIG. 105.—Stone figure of better workmanship than is generally seen in these first predynastic period amulets, but of the same racial type. Found at Gebelein, near Thebes.

To face p. 176

any counterpart in real life, though it is usually based on a generalised remembrance of something actually seen. Analogous cases are found in mediæval pictures of the apostles, where they are often repre-

FIG. 107-*a*.

FIG. 107-*b*.

Terra-cotta figurine from a grave at Gebelein. The hair is painted black and the body brown. A rather similar figure is seen on the vase in Fig. 120.

sented as bishops in full canonicals, not because the painter or his patrons thought that the apostles really wore such vestments, but because that dress was associated in their minds with sacred actions, and therefore a

FIG. 108.—Figurine of light grey clay found at Toukh. The black designs painted on it are supposed to represent tattoo markings. Height about five inches. Now at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. (The band round the waist is only a strip of metal fastening the figure to its support.)

picture of a sacred person thus clothed was more suggestive and more conformable with their mental picture.

It is impossible to say whether there was in Egypt a development of the art of drawing similar to that

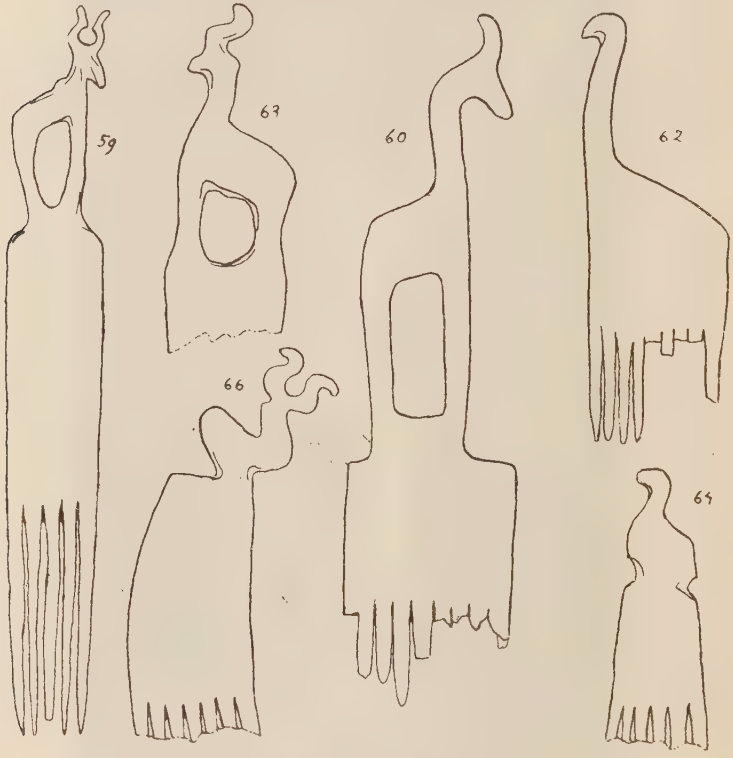

FIG. 109.—Animal figures rather resembling the *contours découpés* of palæolithic times (see page 29).

development from flat carvings which Piette traced so well in France, but it is rather significant that so few sketches of any sort can be assigned to the earlier divisions of the predynastic period. Objects corresponding to Piette's *contours découpés* are found

sometimes as ornaments on combs (Fig. 109), sometimes as palettes for grinding and mixing eye paint (Fig. 110). They occur in all the early deposits, but after sequence date 60 the combs are seldom found and the palettes become so conventionalised that they no longer have any resemblance to animals.

FIG. 110.— Slate palette in the form of a bird. Now in the Brussels Museum. Half actual size.

Occasionally they have traces of paint adhering to them. It is not likely that even in those early times this paint was used only for adornment. Primitive man is more practical and less fantastic than we generally believe him to be. It is well known that in later times a rim of green colour was painted round the eyes to moderate the glare of the sub-tropic sun, therefore we may suppose that during the polished stone period the old Egyptians considered those streaks of paint beneficial as well as beautiful. It also acted as a disinfectant. Those who have seen the fly-covered eyes of modern Egyptian children must regret that eye-painting has gone out of fashion there. Green malachite paint is still used as a disinfectant in Central Africa.

The neolithic Egyptian, like the palæolithic

European, attempted to make these flat carvings more life-like by adding incised lines (Fig. 111), and until his world had become well accustomed to the appearance of objects carved in low relief, he seems to have had the same lack of encouragement to practise the art of drawing on the flat. His rare early drawings of animals resemble those of the early palæolithic age in being always in absolute profile, but there are no signs of his even beginning to make that wonderful progress which, under more favourable circumstances, had brought the cave men's art to such strange excellence. On the contrary, it seems as if his art was in a stage, not merely of stagnation, but of degeneration. And in truth the Egyptian, first as an agriculturist and later as a town dweller, had but little opportunity of acquiring good mental pictures of wild animals. His brain was not saturated with impressions of the colour and the form, the habits and the movements of freely living creatures. Neither had he any stimulus to represent them well. He seems to have outgrown the religion based on imitative magic, which rewarded its votaries with an increased supply

FIG. 111.—Flat slate palette having the outline form of a fish. The resemblance has been increased by a few incised lines. There are a great number of such palettes in Prof. Petrie's collection at University College, London.

of daily food. That is the only religion which appeals strongly to primitive human beings of all ages, just as all children in their earliest youth have little thought except for what concerns their daily sustenance. It is a religion which does not stimulate its art to create any visible expression of thankfulness or reverence, for such immature minds do not recognise any special agency and have no sense of gratitude. At a more advanced stage they become aware of adverse influences which then they seek to counteract or to avoid. Hence the desire for charms and prophylactics, the graven image or the pictured wall, but it is still chiefly against the evil that may befall them day by day that such art products are required. The future has as yet but few terrors for their unimaginative minds.

With increased experience the great mystery of death and of a future life becomes more and more insistent and also more and more mysterious by contrast with other mysteries which, though formerly impenetrable, have now become clearer to their stronger and wider powers of vision. Then there arises a desire to secure sustenance and comfort in that future life. In obedience to this craving the potter moulds figures (Fig. 107) to accompany the lonely dead, and funeral vases to contain the food with which these hungry souls may regale themselves and thus cease from troubling the living inhabitants of the upper world.

In a still more advanced stage the conception of adverse influences is extended beyond the grave, and

means are devised to secure protection against the evil spirits that may beset the defenceless soul during its perilous journey towards the distant dwellings of the immortal gods. In dealing with those shadowy regions the artist has not the sustaining and restraining influence of naturalism. His work cannot be compared with the works of nature as seen by other men. He is free to exercise his imagination unencumbered with any burdens of reality. Thus we might imagine that his flights of fancy would not be impeded by any forces attracting him downwards towards his mother earth. But human nature is often weakest when it is most free. Instead of soaring to greater heights and leading his fellow-men to nobler conceptions of the mysterious future and of the forces ruling man's destiny after his apparent death, the artist of those days stumbled amidst fantastic incongruities composed of ill-assorted elements, disjointed portions of the mental pictures impressed upon his brain by ordinary creatures having a natural existence in this material world. The sphinxes, the gryphons, the human-headed monsters and the animal-headed gods of human form, even the demons and the angels, all testify to the poverty of imagination of artists who lose contact with the firm ground of nature. It is dangerous to give way to the incitement of their fellow-men to make unsupported flights beyond the limitations imposed upon them by the conditions of their art, conditions that are determined by the capabilities of the human eye and the power of the

FIG. 112.—Armless figurine made of lead, a material very seldom used for this purpose.

FIG. 113.—Ivory figurine with knob on head rather similar to that in Fig. 106. Though the style is very archaic, Prof. Petrie thinks that this statuette and also the leaden figure belong to the latter part of the predynastic period.

human brain to read, in the shape and colour of material forms, the underlying meaning which is being so slowly revealed to an expectant world.

These changes in the ideals of men and in the demands made upon artists after such an expansion of their ideals are fairly well exemplified in the relics of Egyptian art. The early specimens are crude but sincere attempts to represent men and animals in a manner as true to nature as was possible for rather unskilled hands.

A great number of figurines which are evidently prehistoric have been discovered in Egypt. They used to be largely bought up for museums and private collections, by men who did not realise that such specimens, snatched by ignorant fossickers from unrecorded graves, are of as little value as isolated words or letters cut out from an ancient manuscript. There are many different varieties, mostly female; some are steatopygous. Until a well-authenticated series, classified according to age, can be obtained it is useless to frame any theories about their evolution or their bearing on the history of art during that long period. They were often summarised; that is to say, certain limbs or features were omitted if they appeared to the sculptor craftsman comparatively unimportant. These armless and legless statuettes (Figs. 112 and 113) are very puzzling. There is no evidence that they are the rudimentary forms from which the more complete figurines were developed. Their rigid symmetry and the occasional presence

of certain definite details, such as the veil and belt (Fig. 114), would rather seem to indicate that they are degenerate or perhaps highly conventionalised types. They may, however, merely be early instances of that uncertainty, which even in modern times is still felt, how far realism should be avoided or should be sought after. We can all agree about the extreme limits in either direction. We no longer consider that a sculptor is justified in omitting neck and arms and legs, leaving only a head upon a simply squared or rounded pillar to represent the human form. On the other hand, we do not expect him to carve each individual hair. When we discuss a painter's work there is still more divergence of opinion as to what amount of definiteness of form he should portray. What wonder then that the artists of seven or eight thousand years ago should tread with hesitation those strange new paths which even yet we have not thoroughly explored.

Fig. 114.—Figure moulded with vegetable paste on a reed core, and painted red and black. About two-thirds actual size. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Some of their experiments seem curiously childish, and for others it is difficult to assign a satisfactory reason. On a palette now in the Egyptian collection at University College, London, there is a drawing representing two animals in rather a strange position

(Fig. 115). It is the earliest known instance of what is now called "heraldic opposition." In order to give them a semblance of solidity the artist has used cross hatching in the space between their bodies. Rough cross hatching on the bodies is common enough in Egyptian and all other primitive work, but this use of it is, as far as I know, unique. It seems to be a device for making the figures stand out in bold relief. Bearing in mind Mr. G. Murray's theory that this heraldic position is due to an attempt to represent both sides of an animal (see page 52 and note 67*a*), one may fancy that this artist made a bold experiment, and tried to give his drawing the appearance of a single animal carved upon the stone. This idea is rather confirmed by the same figures being repeated on the other side of the palette, and by their having inlaid ivory eyes similar to those frequently seen in the statuettes.

Drawings are rare on these palettes, and few of them are of any merit. On a specimen from Hu (Fig. 116) a giraffe and various other animals are sketched in a style that resembles that of the wretched figures painted on the early vases (see Fig. 98), or merely scratched on them as a sign perhaps of ownership. Figure 117 shows a number of these pottery marks collected from various sources by M. Jean Capart for his *Primitive Art in Egypt*. I have not been able to find any good classification of them according to relative age, but nearly all of them have the same character, and show no signs either of

Fig. 116 Fig. 115

A common type of the slate palettes found in predynastic graves. They are usually about eight inches long and have little or no ornamentation. University College.

To face p. 188.

FIG. 117.—Figures scratched on predynastic pottery of various dates, and supposed to be special signs used by the makers or owners.

gradual improvement or of degeneration. A few of the figures inscribed on the rocks of Upper Egypt (Fig. 118) are in a similar style, though many of them are of rather a higher grade, the animals not being in absolute profile but having their rightful number of legs. Unfortunately no thorough study has yet been made of them. Some of them have been so long exposed to the weather that they are covered

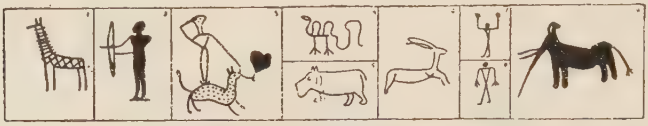

FIG. 118.—Eight figures incised on rock at Gibel-Cheikh-Raama (Upper Egypt), discovered and sketched by M. G. Legrain. The ninth figure is at Chatt-el-Rigal.

with a brownish coating like that on the original surface of the rock. Their age may be guessed at by comparing them with the inscriptions cut on the same rock during the fifth and sixth dynasties, which, although made about five thousand years ago look as fresh as if they had been cut yesterday.[27] Some day we may be able to trace the connection between these drawings and those of Libya, Algeria and Morocco. Perhaps we may even find that the descendants of the cave men of France and Spain migrated through these countries into Egypt, maintaining for a while their artistic traditions, but degenerating gradually when they ceased to do any original work. If they contented themselves with copying the copies of the drawings

Fig. 119.

Fig. 120.

PLATE VIII.

Fig. 119.—Jar with designs of curvilinear type painted with red slip before the vase was fired.

Fig. 120.—Extended drawing of part of the design on a vase of the same type found at Abydos. These jars are generally about twelve to eighteen inches high. They belong to the second prehistoric period. Sequence dates 42 to 60.

To face p. 191.

of their forefathers, they would in time have easily arrived at the stage represented by the sketches on the palettes and the paintings on the early Egyptian pottery.

On pottery of a rather later period, after sequence date 42, there are signs of a change in the habits and ideas of these neolithic people. The vases assume different shapes (Pl. VIII. and IX.), one of which is not unlike that of some examples of the very early Chaldean pottery found at Susa (see Fig. 284). The rows of long-necked birds which now begin to appear on the Egyptian vases differ from the Chaldean chiefly in having their beaks curved instead of straight.

It is not prudent to lay too much stress on these analogies. The early steps of artists of all ages are very similar; character is not clearly shown until a certain amount of progress has been made. As an instance of this similarity we may note the curious triangular form given to the human body in the drawings on still earlier vases (Fig. 95). When the same form is found on early Chaldean (Fig. 214), on Ægean (Fig. 301), and on Greek vases (Fig. 373), it can hardly be taken as indicating any close relationship between them, for some modern children draw people with triangular bodies, and that form is adopted also by men of the hill tribes of India (Fig. 121), and by the red men of North America.

Another sign of the growth of new ideas, or of a fresh current coming into Egypt, is the frequency

with which boats begin to be depicted (Figs. 122 and 123). Some of them are so vague that it has

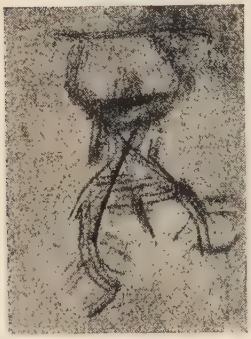

FIG. 121.—Drawing made with pencil and paper by a Chitral native, India.

FIG. 122.—Vase of the second predynastic period, showing a boat with two huts or cabins on it.

FIG. 123.—Drawings done with brown paint on vases of the second predynastic period. The concentric semicircles are said to represent aloes growing in pots. They are still cultivated in cemeteries in Egypt.

been doubted whether they are boats, but the series has now been traced from these rough sketches up

to well-drawn vessels with mast and sail, oars and steering-paddles (Fig. 124). Otherwise we might have been tempted to regard those strange slanting lines beneath the boat as an experiment in depicting its shadow or reflection, although indeed the value of

FIG. 124.—Figures of boats with oars, steering paddle and sail. Chatt-el-Rigal. Discovered and sketched by M. G. Legrain.

subsidiary shadows remained unnoticed or unrecorded until very late in the world's art history. Man's literary development was somewhat similar. We can hardly imagine an Egyptian or a Greek writing such a sentence as "Sweet are the uses of adversity."

There is also no attempt at indicating the water, either by wavy lines as in Babylonia, or by the zigzag lines which represented the Egyptian's mental picture of its surface.[23] Neither is there any indication of any land for the men and women to stand upon. Modern artists have been known to commit the error of drawing objects without any visible support; the mistake is only a survival of a failing which was once universal. As to the general style of the drawing we may remark that curved lines are becoming much more frequent; even the legs of the animals are bent, and not straight as in the older examples. The human bodies have lost their rigid triangular shape, and are regaining their more natural contours.

Most of these vases were found in graves of the

FIG. 125.—Skeleton in the contracted position characteristic of neolithic burials in many different countries and periods. View looking down into a grave at Naga-ed-Dêr. It dates from the first or second dynasty when full-length burial was only beginning to be practised in Egypt. From Dr. Reisner's *Early Dynastic Cemeteries of Naga-ed-Dêr* (1908), by permission of Messrs. Hinrichs, Leipzig.

usual neolithic type, the body lying on its left side

and in a contracted position, with the knees drawn up to the chin (Fig. 125). The men and women depicted on the vases are supposed to be mourners or relatives of the deceased, collected upon the river bank to bid him farewell as he starts for his long and lonely voyage on the waters of the underworld. The curious S or Z marks scattered about on these vases are like the conventionalised forms of the birds, which seem to be meant for wild ducks, that are found on early Chaldean pottery (see Fig. 205). There is one other slight detail that is worth noticing. We have here perhaps the earliest picture of a child, a little child stretching out a tiny hand to hold its mother by her dress (Fig. 120).

Vase painting, unfortunately for archæologists, never reached any great perfection in ancient Egypt. Already in the very earliest dynastic times, and long before any historical evidence is available, the ruling classes preferred the more costly ware of polished stone or perhaps of metal, while the rest of the population seem to have been unable to afford any decoration on their earthenware. We are thus deprived of one of the best means for deciding the relative age of the relics of those times. In many countries, by noting the special forms and decoration of the vases, experts can now determine the relative antiquity of other objects found along with them. In Egypt the absence of characteristic pottery has greatly contributed to the uncertainty which prevails concerning the progress of events in

that very interesting period just previous to the foundation of the earliest dynasties possessing a written record.

Towards the end of the prehistoric period when the early kings had apparently become well established, the technique, or craftsman's work, displayed in the stone vases was better than the art; much time was spent in triumphing over mechanical difficulties, but the purely æsthetic side suffered. Occasionally we get splendid bowls, magnificent in their stern simplicity (Fig. 126), but all too frequently fantastic shapes, quite unsuited to the material, were made at a vast expense of time and labour. They were curious, but seldom beautiful. One even has the shape of a leathern bottle, rather like those in use among the Spanish peasantry of to-day. Sometimes they are fluted (Fig. 127), probably in imitation of the forms of copper bowls, for copper was a rare and royal metal and sturdy stone must bow before that harsh metallic sway. It is also possible that they were coated with gold foil to simulate a bowl of solid gold, a custom not unknown to the Chaldeans and the Cretans (see page 381).

It would be interesting if we could find out for whom they were made. One cannot imagine any artist or craftsman deliberately setting to work to make such things on his own initiative. Were they produced to please some prehistoric millionaire? It almost seems as if ostentation had begun to have some guiding influence in art. How else can we

FIG. 126.—Finely polished bowl, two feet in diameter, but not more than half an inch in thickness, hollowed out of a block of diorite. Found at Hierakonpolis. Owens College, Manchester.

To face p. 196

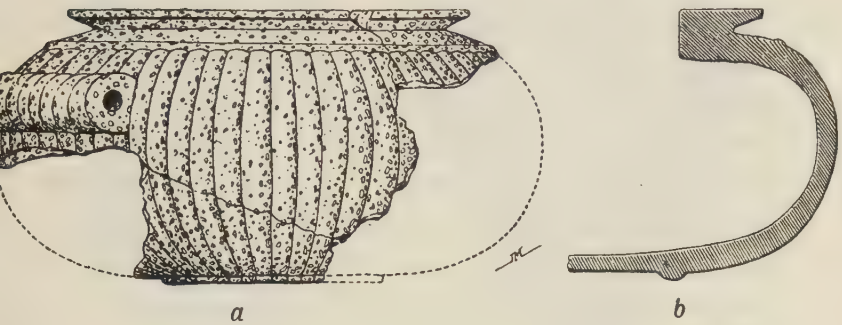

FIG. 127.—(*a*) Fluted bowl of hard porphyry about twelve inches in diameter found in the early dynastic royal tomb excavated by M. de Morgan at Nagada. Now in the Cairo Museum. (*b*) Section showing the thinness of the walls.

FIG. 128.—Painted earthenware vases of the later predynastic period. Some of them are imitations of diorite or other stone vases; *f* and *g* have the later type of handle—wavy, and not perforated.

account for those earthenware vases painted to imitate marble and other hard stone (Fig. 128 and Pl. IX.), and placed with other offerings in the tombs of later date? It is not likely that they were made for real use or even for ornament; they were probably an economical substitute deposited by the relatives of the deceased, comforting themselves with the belief that they looked just as well at the funeral, and that nobody would ever know the difference.

I remember a similar case of ostentatious trickery in England at a magnificent ball given in the depths of winter. The rooms were decorated with thousands of beautiful Maréchal Niel roses, but all those out of reach were artificial.

One of these imitations is thought by Schweinfurt to have given rise to a definite spiral pattern. According to him it began as a number of tiny spirals, imitating the appearance of the little fossil shells crowded together in the nummulite limestone so common in the rocks of Egypt. The copyist, not knowing or not caring what they were meant for, found it easier to make fewer and larger spirals, until at last two or three of them would cover a whole vase (Figs. 128 *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, and Pl. IX.), but they gave no suggestion of their original purpose. It seems more probable, however, that the larger ones were intended for serpents, which were certainly favourite subjects in early Egyptian carvings.

This sketch of the progress of the most primitive art of Egypt is necessarily very hazy and imperfect. Many

Fig. 91

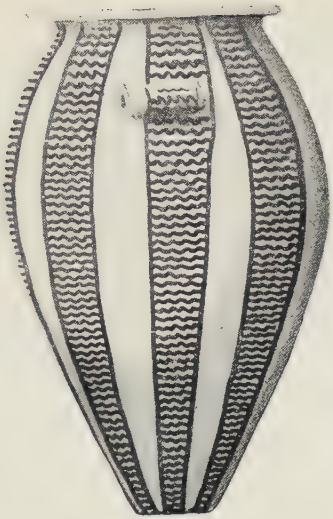

Fig. 129.

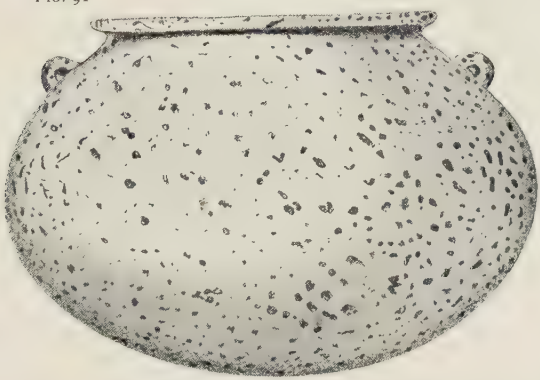

Fig. 130.

Fig. 131.

Fig. 132.

PLATE IX.

Fig. 91.—Black topped pottery of the first prehistoric period. The black rim is due to the vase being placed mouth downwards in the glowing ashes when it was fired.

Figs. 129, 130, 131, 132.—Vases and bowls of the second prehistoric period with horizontally perforated handles. Compare the rows of animals with those on Chaldean pottery (Fig. 201). The spirals of Figure 132 were made by three brushes fixed on one handle. Figure 130 was painted to imitate hard porphyritic stone. The first three were found at El Amrah, the two lower ones at Abydos.

To face p. 198.

of the gaps will probably be filled up in a few years, and then we shall be able to trace the fortunes of this singular people who apparently lived for ages in that fertile valley without producing any large-sized works of art, although they seem to have arrived at a fairly high stage of civilisation and had good artistic capacity. No remains of palaces or great temples have as yet been discovered. If any such buildings had ever been constructed some relics would surely have survived, even if they had been built of unbaked brick. In that treeless country they would not have been built of wood. So few weapons have been found that we may imagine that they led a fairly peaceful life undisturbed by foreign invasions or any violent ambitions. If their wealth was evenly distributed and not concentrated in the hands of kings or priests, that would account for the absence of great palaces and temples, of large decorative objects and life-sized statues. All early art expression, although racial in its style, is personal and individualistic in its motives; therefore in a primitive community of undistinguished men there can be no grand works, for they have not yet discovered the power of willing co-operation. It is not until they have been welded into an organised body by religious leaders or by the fierce hammerings of ambitious men that they are sufficiently united to create large and noble expressions of their national ideals. That such a welding did take place in Egypt there is abundant evidence, but how or when it happened we do not know. From the remains that have recently been

unearthed at Abydos, El Amrah, and Hierakonpolis we see that a very great change began to come over the land before the first dynasties known to history were founded. It may have been due to the ambition of local rulers gradually absorbing and disposing of the resources of larger and still larger districts; or, as one ought rather to express it, longer and still longer stretches of the river banks. It would, however, be more in accordance with what happened in other countries if we suppose that the change was produced by the invasion of a fiercer or more pushful race. It is also likely that this race was better armed; certainly copper seems to have become more plentiful during the latter part of the prehistoric period, and it is now known that copper can be hardened sufficiently to furnish a very effective material for weapons. The agricultural population of Egypt with their flint spear-heads and stone maces would have had as little hope of success against such invaders as the Aztecs had against the Spaniards. But this foreign invasion, which, however, may not have been foreign or may not have been an invasion, differed from that conquest of the New World in one important feature. The Spaniards stole the stored up gold and silver of the natives and took it away to Spain, therewith causing a fatal congestion of their country's heart and brain. The invaders of Egypt, by introducing new industries such as wheat growing and sheep breeding, showed the natives how to produce more wealth. A different system of burial began to be practised; in some of

the better furnished graves the body is extended at full length, and occasionally shows signs of being partially embalmed. It is possible that the invasion was made by a small number of foreign traders organising and exploiting the resources of the country. At first the natives may have shared in the benefits of this organisation, but after a time the concentration of wealth and energy into a few hands seems to have made their lot harder than ever. Maspero, in his *Egypte et Chaldée* (1895), page 343, when describing the condition of the mass of the nation, says: "It was only by permission of the lord that he could use the land or the house of his fathers. If he added to them by his labour he merely increased the value of the landlord's property. What he possessed to-day, would the lord let him have it to-morrow? . . . The condition of the people never changed, the burden never grew less; whatever hand held the rod, they always suffered from its heavy strokes."

If art is the expression of a nation's feelings and aspirations, what form can we expect to be evolved by a people whose upper classes were mainly actuated by a coarse desire for domination and for mere material luxuries while the rest had but a sense of utter carelessness, or perhaps of dumb despair? My work now is to trace the evolution of their art in its happier period. I do not envy the task of those who have to trace the prolonged monotonous course of its decline and fall.

CHAPTER IX

PHARAONIC ART

We have noticed (page 191) that at some indeterminate period far back in their national existence a certain change was manifest in the art of the Egyptians, and that then their drawing began to resemble in some respects that of the earliest Chaldeans. We have also remarked that another change came over the land at a later, but still undetermined period. In this second phase there are again signs of resemblance to Chaldean art and customs, but this time it is to the art of a later date, produced apparently under the influence of a Semitic people who had invaded Chaldea. Naturalism seems to have given way to idealism. The first sign we see is the appearance in Egyptian drawings and carvings of crude fantastic animals with long twisted necks (Figs. 140 and 141), or curious upward curving wings fastened incongruously upon their backs (Fig. 133). It may be that those ancient artists were struggling to express ideas which even now are merely aspirations. The Greeks, whose methods modern artists have imitated, gave equally impossible wings to some of their celestial beings; but, with their greater tendency towards naturalism, they gradually abandoned the

upward curl and adopted the straight, sweeping form which since then has generally been used to distinguish the wings of beneficent spirits from those of malignant or rapacious demons.

That this pictorial expression of ideas gave rise in Egypt and in other countries to picture writing, and then to hieroglyphics, and ultimately to abbreviated forms, some of which developed into the signs of our own alphabet, is now generally admitted,

FIG. 133.—Drawing of the design on a first dynasty seal cylinder, reconstituted by Prof. Petrie from several fragments of impressions made by it and discovered in a royal tomb at Abydos. The ladder-like hieroglyph is intended to represent a channel of water. The hieroglyph above it is a fish. The foot hieroglyph became in after times stylised as a reversed L. The origin of the last hieroglyph on the right is not known.

although the actual origin of many of the signs is still a matter of debate. The hieroglyphics of the Egyptians cannot be traced back beyond the first dynasty (Fig. 133). Many of the signs were then already so conventionalised that their origin has baffled all research. No traces have yet been found of the tentative naturalistic figures which must have preceded them. These hieroglyphic conventional signs remained almost unchanged from the first dynasty

FIG. 133.—Flint knife of the commonest Egyptian shape in the later predynastic period. The flakes were always split off with wonderful regularity, sometimes one side was polished. The handle of this knife is covered with gold foil sewn on with gold thread; *c* is a drawing of the rosettes and serpents engraved on the other side of the handle.

until the Roman period—three thousand years or more. This immutability seems to render it probable that their evolution was also a slow process and might have taken place in some other country. Future discoveries may throw a long-sought-for light on this intricate question, then we shall be able to get a clearer perception of the influences controlling the evolution of that well-known conventional style of art

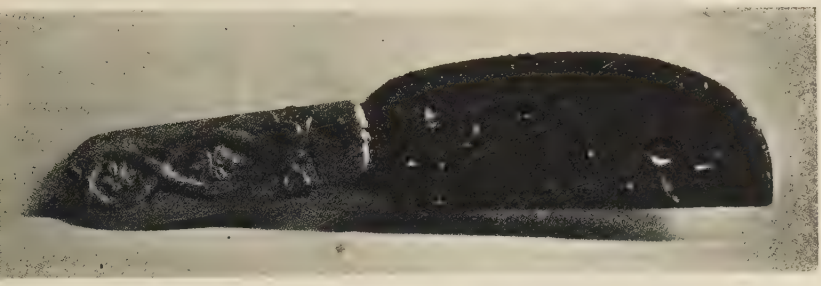

Fig. 135.—Small flint knife with ivory handle. University College, London. A few years ago M. H. de Morgan found three fine specimens of this class of knife in a grave near Thebes. As the skeleton was in the contracted position it helped to fix the period to which these handles should be assigned. In the temple at Hierakonpolis a flint knife was discovered measuring two and a half feet in length.

which is commonly called Egyptian, but perhaps may prove to be partially Semitic.

Besides the winged and long-necked animals, the Egyptians of this period used several art motives which were also in favour among the Semitised Chaldeans—entwined serpents (Figs. 134 and 135), rosettes, lions following their victims or attacking them in the rear. In a religious dance we see the hands folded in the Chaldean style (Fig. 136), and

for a time engraved cylinders were used to impress designs upon the soft clay which served to seal their jars of oil or wine (Fig. 133).[29] This fashion is supposed to have been introduced in Chaldea by the Semites, and it remained popular there for two or three thousand years. In Egypt it died away after a few centuries, and was replaced by that form of seal which is stamped upon the clay or wax, instead of being rolled over it.

Fig. 136.—One of three men in the Chaldean attitude of reverence, carved on the great mace head of Nar-Mer, found when excavating the site of the temple at Hierakonpolis in 1899. Now in the Cairo Museum.

The palette (Fig. 140) on which those fantastic animals are carved seems to have been developed from the earlier and simpler palettes, though no trace of paint was found on it nor on any of the other large specimens. Some of them measure nearly two feet; they were probably used for ceremonial purposes. Their decoration extends over the whole surface, except where a small circle is left blank as if to receive the pigment. Perhaps, however, they were never used for paint. The circle may be only due to a reminiscence of the depression made in the ancient palettes by the grinding pebble, but whatever was its origin it seems to be an important factor in the scheme of decoration. In the British Museum Catalogue (1909) they are called shields. Now (1928) altered to "ceremonial objects."

To face p. 207

a *b*

FIG. 137.—Fragment, nine inches long, of a slate palette now in the Louvre. The lion and the bird emblems are enclosed in walls, while the bull is in the open attacking the enemy.

Several other palettes have been discovered recently; they help to bridge over the gap which existed between the Chaldean style of art shown on the previously known palettes and the Pharaonic style that appears in all the work of the third dynasty, and remained unchanged for ages. These new specimens have settled some of the controversies which raged around the old ones, and now no one doubts that they belong to a period embracing the very earliest dynasty (about 3400 B.C.). M. Maspero had believed them to be Egyptian work, and thought he could attribute one of them to the twenty-second dynasty (945 to 745 B.C.). Dr. Budge, the Keeper of the Egyptian Department of the British Museum, considered them to be Mesopotamian works imported into Egypt as presents offered to the kings of the eighteenth dynasty (1580 to 1350 B.C.).

Mr. F. Legge, in an interesting and detailed account written for the *Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archæology* (June and December 1909), has tried to arrange them in the order of their respective antiquity. He considers a fragment now at the Louvre (Fig. 137) to be the oldest, and certainly it is one of the least conventionalised. The subject is that glorification of the oppressor of the weak which from this time onwards is so frequently chosen by artists. Chosen, forsooth! that is not the right word to use. The artist had but little choice in those days; starvation or worse would have been his lot if he failed to please his master.

There is the king, symbolised as the Powerful Bull trampling down an unarmed and unresisting foe. In a lower panel five standards with emblems of the gods grasp with human and ungodly hands a rope wherewith to bind the victim of their rapacity. It is the sad old story of sordid ambition claiming the sanction of religion, and forcing art to pander to its pride of wealth and domination. Art flourishes for awhile in that rich forcing-house, the latent germs burst out and rapidly develop, ultimately, however, to be cramped by the protecting walls and stifled by that artificial atmosphere.

The bull is a vigorous piece of carving, but it is already conventionalised in some of the details, such as the veins on the legs and the lines around the eye. Its style is rather similar to that of the Assyrian sculptors, although they lived nearly three thousand years later. The figure of the man is good up to a little above the waist, the left shoulder is passable, but the right shoulder and arm presented a problem which was much too difficult. On the other side of the palette (Fig. 137-A) it appears at first sight as if the designer had solved it by adopting a more natural position for the victim, showing his chest instead of his back. This is an illusion, owing to the right shoulder being broken off. The upper hand shows the palm quite distinctly, and the position of the thumb proves that it is meant for a left hand. It is rather remarkable to find hands so well rendered at such an early period; they are

Fig. 138.—It is unfortunate that so little seems to be known about the origin and history of these two fragments of a palette, for it appears to represent almost the high-water mark of Egyptian bas-relief work in composition if not in technical detail. The discovery of the missing portions might enable us to ascertain its exact age and perhaps to interpret its meaning.

To face p. 209 and Fig. 139

Fig. 139.—Mr. Legge considers that these animals are not giraffes, but gerunak gazelles, a species still living in Africa. The palm tree, although inaccurate and necessarily rather conventional, is one of the best renderings of tree life in ancient sculpture. Even in Greek times there seems to have been very little feeling for inanimate nature. Size eleven inches by thirteen inches.

To face p. 208 *and Fig.* 138

much better than the hands in the other palettes, better indeed than in most reliefs until several thousand years later.

The eyes have the usual fault of all low reliefs and drawings up to Greek times; it seems very strange that artists should have been contented for so many ages to give full face eyes to profile heads. The eyebrows are only indicated by lines following the curve of the eyelids, while the eyes themselves are flush with the brow and cheek.

The palette which Mr. Legge considers as the next oldest offers a beautiful example of naturalistic work (Fig. 139). The whole slate might aptly be entitled "Peace and War," for to this peaceful picture of giraffes browsing on a palm we have on the other side the strong contrast of a lion and several birds of prey devouring the corpses of the captives of a king (Fig. 138). The general style and the execution of the figures on its lower part are so very different that it is difficult to believe them to be the work of the same hand. Notice the rough cuts to indicate the finger joints of the man whose arms are bound behind his back and the poor modelling of all the other hands. It may, however, only be another instance of the greater difficulty which all primitive artists experienced when dealing with human subjects. Perhaps some day more light may be thrown upon this specimen by the discovery of the missing portion. It may possibly be lying unrecognised in some local collection. The smaller piece, which so happily com-

pletes the figure of the giraffe, had lain some time unnoticed in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford until Professor J. L. Myres saw that it would fit on to the part preserved in the British Museum.

We have already discussed the strange animals on the third slate (Figs. 140 and 141). Their carver was evidently not inspired by his subject; the execution is flat, crude, and careless. It would almost seem as if he had not tried to express his own ideas, but had merely carried out the instructions given by some other person.

The fourth specimen is even worse. Its lack of naturalism is not counterbalanced by any flight of idealistic rendering (Figs. 142 and 143). The fifth is a simple pictograph of some real or imaginary incident (Fig. 144). Dr. Schurz, in his *Urgeschichte der Kultur* (Leipzig, 1900), calls it "an Assyrian hunting scene," although it is a couple of thousand years older than any known products of Assyrian art. Artist historians may fall into strange errors if they do not consult the latest reports of the archæologists. Unfortunately these reports are often very late indeed, and besides being voluminous and not very clear to the outsider, they give such hard knocks to the upholders of rival theories that non-combatants may emerge from the struggle with an aching head. In the dress of the men depicted on this fifth palette a notable change is to be observed. They are wearing a sort of kilt (Fig. 145), rather like the loin cloth which was the dress usually given in

Fig. 140.—Slate palette found at Hierakonpolis in 1900. Eighteeen inches long. Ashmolean Museum. Notice the exaggerated length of the claws of the rapacious animals, even of the dogs.

To face p. 211 *and Fig.* 141

Fig. 141.—The wings of the bird-headed quadruped rather resemble those of the Chaldean bird (Fig. 204). The animal-headed human figure with a flute (?) is supposed to be a hunter in disguise.

To face p. 210 and Fig. 140

FIG. 142.

FIG. 143.

Palette bought in Egypt for the Louvre Museum by M. Bénédite. Being of inferior workmanship to Fig. 139 it has been thought to be older, but the treatment of the subject would seem to confirm Mr. Legge's classification of it as more recent. It is

FIG. 144.—This large palette is not carved on the other side. The left-hand fragment is in the Louvre, the rest in the British Museum. Size about two feet. Mr. Legge surmises that it may depict a confederation of tribes (represented by their totems held by the standard-bearers) against a tribe which had a lion for its totem.

FIG. 145.—The object above the lion's head is supposed to be a temple. The small lion may be intended to represent a cub, though representations of young animals are very rare in ancient art. This lion and the one in Fig. 150 are good examples of the peculiar early-dynastic method of rendering the mane. In Chaldea and the Mediterranean district the locks of hair were pointed. See Figs. 246, 340-*b* and 411.

To face p. 212

Egyptian sculptures and paintings during many succeeding ages to all the men not of foreign nationality. They have the fox or panther's tail hanging from their girdle; but there is no sign of the karnata, which forms the clothing of the woolly-headed victim carved on the first palette. The karnata was a curious cylindrical sheath somewhat resembling an elongated form of the cod piece of the Middle Ages. It is seen on most of the male figurines of the preceding period (Fig. 146), and we shall find that it is a distinctive feature of the dress of the Cretans. It may be that the pre-dynastic Egyptians belonged to the great neolithic Mediterranean race which, as we shall see later on, had so keen artistic sense and so strong a tendency towards naturalism. Perhaps also the earliest Chaldeans belonged to the same race, but that is a generalisation which is at present equally impossible to prove or to disprove. They buried their dead in the same contracted position as the early Cretans and Egyptians, but no relics

FIG. 146.—Ivory figurine found in 1897–8 at Hierakonpolis. It shows the karnata commonly worn by the pre-dynastic Egyptians and by the Cretans (see Fig. 285). Size about seven inches.

FIG. 147.—Fragment of a palette now in the Cairo Museum. In all the animals represented on these palettes we see an avoidance of that full face aspect which was so commonly given in Chaldean carvings (see Fig. 225).

Fig. 148.—The captives have been beheaded, the long-necked lions have been lassoed, the powerful bull has broken down the walls of the abandoned cities, and the cow-faced goddess Hathor regards the scene of slaughter and destruction with the same complacency with which the gods of most nations regard those crimes that tend to bring increased revenues to the temples and the priests.

To face p. 215 *and Fig.* 149

FIG. 149.—Ancient artists seldom portrayed men running; I cannot recall any other example of this attitude. This palette was found at Hierakonpolis and is now in the Cairo Museum. It is twenty-six inches long.

To face p. 214 *and Fig.* 148

have as yet been found to show what sort of clothing they used to wear.

In the fragment which comes next in Mr. Legge's list (Fig. 147-*a*) we have apparently a pictographic account of the destruction of some walled towns by different leaders or tribes. Their emblems are perched above the ground-plan pictures of the towns, and are using the ordinary Egyptian hoe to break down the walls, which were probably only made with bricks of sun-dried mud. The animals arranged in rows on the reverse (Fig. 147-*b*) may represent the booty captured in the thickets near the towns. In this slate there is no pretence of artistic composition, it is a mere register of facts. The trees seem to give a touch of naturalism, but they are very similar to the hieroglyphic sign for a tree, and they may be only a reiteration of that sign, used without any artistic purpose.

The seventh and most recent of all the palettes (Fig. 148) bears a name in ordinary Egyptian hieroglyphic characters, a name read sometimes as Nar Buzau, but generally as Nar-Mer. He is now identified with Mena or Menes, the first king of the first dynasty. At one time he was considered as a merely mythical personage, but archæologists are discovering that human nature is just as incapable of constructing an entirely unfounded story as of inventing an entirely new design. It seems as if both literary and artistic productions could only be evolved by gradual variations from some actual fact or object. For this reason

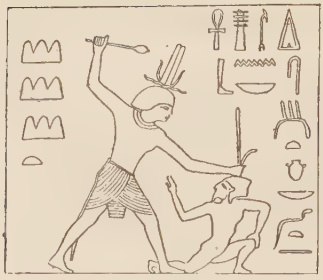

FIG. 150.—King Snefru, third dynasty (about 3000 B.C.).

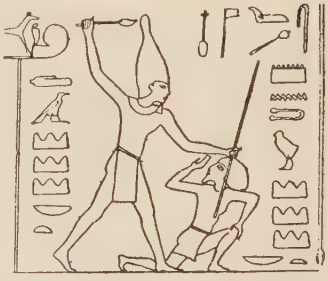

FIG. 151.—King Sahu Ra, fifth dynasty.

Portions of inscriptions cut on the rocks at Wadi Magara, Sinai.

greater attention is now being paid to ancient myths. Thus the theory that the invaders of neolithic Egypt were a foreign and metal using race is strengthened by the legend that they were "Mesniu" or smiths, and came from the land of Punt.

Whoever they were and wherever they came from there is no doubt about the spirit that animated their leaders. There is one idea, and almost only one, that

FIG. 152.—Granite statue of Rameses VI. holding a captive, the conventional attitude of dignity for a king—though indeed this Rameses does not seem to have been very successful in keeping his own subjects in order. Twentieth dynasty. About 1150 B.C. Cairo Museum.

found constant expression in their art. That expression was so satisfying to their narrow souls that it was repeated without any essential variation for two thousand years or more (Figs. 150–1–2). The subjugation of the weak or the slaughter of an unresisting foe is the *leit motiv* of all their compositions, a motive which still stirs the heart-strings of Europeans with Asiatic minds. Recently there has been added a chorus of admiration for Egyptian work by some of the followers of Nietzsche. They take it and the crude products of the earlier Greek schools of sculpture to be convincing examples of the glories of "ruler art" (see Fig. 357). If that be glory, most of the world's great artists should be filled with shame.

This enormous palette which Nar-Mer dedicated at Hierakonpolis in a temple to his god gives no indication that any resistance had been experienced by the king. A brave antagonist was not the good gift he sought from heaven when he made this votive offering.[30] He was evidently not animated with

> "The stern joy which warriors feel
> In foemen worthy of their steel."

It is highly probable that the carver of that slate was constrained to represent the victim as being powerless to ward off the royal blows, for the priests had invented or fostered the fiction that kings were gods, and that it was wicked to resist them. The unholy alliance between greed and religion had been consummated, and the fruit of their union was the

enslavement of one of the most artistic races the world has ever seen. Egyptian sculptors had

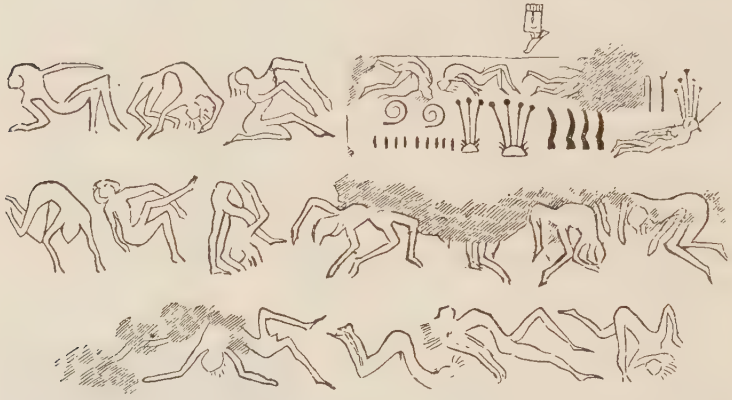

FIG. 153.—Outline figures of slaughtered enemies incised on the base of King Ka-Sekhem's statue. The spirals represent hundreds. The other signs are thousands and tens of thousands.[31]

evidently learned to put a certain amount of expression into their work, but there is no strong feeling in this rendering of a victorious king. He excels by mere size and by the length of his legs, which are out of all proportion to his body.

That conventional method of expressing dignity and power is very common in all immature art, though it is strangely at variance with the popular conception of the character of giants. Folk lore has many stories of their ignorance and stupidity,

FIG. 154.—Ivory statuette found at Hierakonpolis. The projection on the head is a square tenon for insertion, therefore the figure was probably a leg of a stool or some other piece of furniture. Size, five and a half inches.

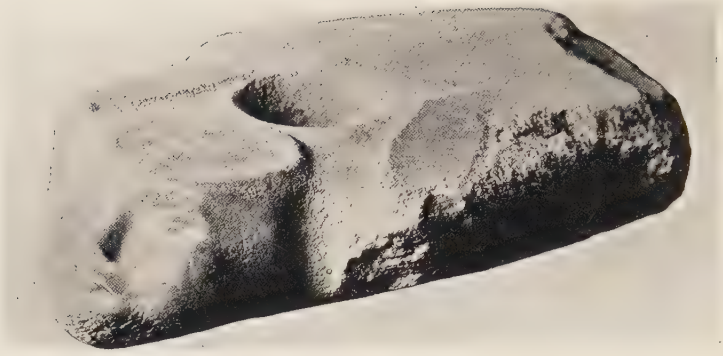

FIG. 155.—This stone with socket for the pivot of a door and ornamented with a human head, was found in position at Hierakonpolis having an upright jamb still on it. It is twenty-six inches long.

FIG. 156.—Ivory figure of a king wearing the crown of Upper (or South) Egypt, It was found at Abydos. Now in British Museum.

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telling how easy it is to get the better of them. Science now seems to confirm that popular view, and to hold that great size is not favourable to intellectual growth. What has become of the terrific monsters of geologic ages? They did not succeed in dominating all the world.

This desire for domination, this gloating over the misfortunes of their victims, is shown by the frequent delineation of contorted corpses on the royal monuments (Fig. 153); by the figures of bound and crouching captives carved for the furniture of their luxurious palaces (Fig. 154); by the heads of human beings sculptured on the stone thresholds (Fig. 155), stretched out as though their bodies were being crushed under the pivots of the massive doors. Even in minor details the delight taken by the ruling classes in treading down an unresisting victim is ludicrously evident. At one time it was fashionable to have human figures worked into the soles of their sandals in order that they might constantly have the pleasure of trampling them under foot (*Champollion Mon. de l'Egypte.* Pl. 155).

Thus the spirit of a demon had entered into and taken possession of the strong and youthful body of Egyptian art. For a while it resisted the baneful influence, and it produced some wonderfully good naturalistic work, though its ideals were not high. In the British Museum, lying among the "miscellaneous antiquities," there is a shrunken figure carved in ivory that shows a strange amount of sympathy

with the feebleness of age (Fig. 156). It would be difficult to find a counterpart of this for many a thousand years. Also there are some slight signs that artists had perceived the glory of unselfish devotion, and had endeavoured to express it in simple statuettes showing a mother and her child (Fig. 157). Animals are rendered with considerable fidelity though with but little life (Figs. 158 and 159). Probably the artists were townsmen, and seldom saw any animals that were not either captive or domesticated. These two lions differ so greatly in their style that it is difficult to believe that both of them belong to the same period, and that their variations may be only due to the difference in the materials they are formed from. The flat band running under the muzzle, from ear to ear, is a curious convention which recurs in Egypt and in other lands up to the fifth century B.C., when the Greeks gradually freed themselves from it.[32] The various stages of that change are well seen in the numerous lion statues in the British Museum. The mane of our ivory lion is rather naturalistic and closely resembles the manes of the lions on the

FIG. 157.—Ivory statuette in the British Museum, of unknown provenance, but of predynastic style.

palettes. Both these systems of rendering a lion's mane were used in Chaldea (see Figs. 217 and 240), and in that country also no specimens have yet been found indicative that the elaborate method was later than the simpler one.

This lack of evidence is the great trouble in all the generalisations about the progress of art in distant ages. It is so tempting to form theories, and it is so hard to realise that our specimens may not be representative of the general state of art in their district at that time. Also it is very

FIG. 158.—Red pottery lion from Hierakonpolis. About twenty inches high. Ashmolean Museum. Early dynastic period.

a *b*

FIG. 159.—Ivory lion from an early dynastic royal tomb at Nagada. The tail was generally curled up on the back in these figures.

difficult to make allowances for all the conflicting causes that might have affected the quality and style of the few examples that some happy chances have permitted us to see. It has been surmised that there was a disastrous relapse after those forward strides made during the rise of the first known dynasty, but until many more well-dated specimens of the second and third dynasty are available it is safer to suspend our judgment.

The steps which led up to the maturity of Egyptian art in the fourth dynasty are not well exemplified by the comparatively few statues that can be accurately classified and dated. There seem to have been various schools or centres of art, probably connected with the different cults which still flourished in Egypt. Although the North and South were now united under one king, and he was believed to be the representative of a god, or even an actual god living upon earth, yet there were many other gods claiming allegiance. They were attended by priests, who were always struggling to obtain the mastery for their own especial god, and to secure for themselves the material luxuries and advantages which were considered the rightful reward of such mastery. Professor Petrie, in his *Arts and Crafts of Ancient Egypt* (1909), gives the outlines of a possible classification of the various schools of sculpture. He bases it on the different qualities of the materials they worked in, soft sandstone and limestone, or basalt, granite, and the other harder rocks.

The roughest and perhaps earliest large statues

FIG. 160.—Two limestone statues of the god Min found in 1893–4 when excavating the site of the temple at Koptos. They are said to show no traces of any metal tool having been used, nor even any stone chisel. They were apparently chipped out with a stone hammer. It would be interesting for an expert to compare this hammer work with the chisel work on the palæolithic relief of a horse (Fig. 23). A smooth round head was also found, but no features are visible. Ashmolean Museum. Size about six feet high.

are those discovered in 1893 at Koptos, about four

hundred miles south of Cairo (Fig. 160). They are supposed to represent the god Min, because they have his characteristic attitude. Although they appear to have been worked by mere hammering and not by any cutting tool, Professor Petrie assigns them to the early dynastic period, while Professor Steindorff considers them to be predynastic. On the side of one of these extremely crude statues (the third one, now in the Museum at Cairo) are carved in slight relief two animals (Fig. 161), which would surprise us by their excellence if we had not already seen that the ability to represent animal life is not necessarily accompanied by any power to depict or carve the human figure. Their feet are placed on small triangular mounds, a conventional method of indicating hilly or mountainous country. This convention was very popular among the Chaldeans, the Hittites, and the Cretans (see Figs. 242 and 316 *bis*), but it does not seem to have satisfied the Egyptians, for this is almost the only unmistakable instance of its use. In the valley of the Nile the hills and mountains are generally flat topped, the peaked form is very seldom seen. It thus appears as if the men who made these statues of their god Min must either have come from a country with peaked hills or must have inherited a convention which did not seem appropriate in their present home. It died a natural death, for art was then alive and could cast off old useless forms, and could pass on to other methods of expression.

At Hierakonpolis, about fifty miles south of

101.—It has been suggested that the lions, bulls, and birds so frequently represented in pre-dynastic work are really the totem animals of the tribes which invaded Egypt. On this supposition the scenes depicted in the palettes would furnish a fairly connected story of the vicissitudes of the various factions. The lion's career does not seem to have been very glorious. It ends up with his total defeat and the triumph of the allied bull and hawk tribes. This style of interpretation might be extended to Chaldea, where not only the lion but also the bull suffered defeat and were subjugated by the eagle.

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FIG. 162.—Limestone statue found at Hierakonpolis. Now in the Cairo Museum.

FIG. 163.—Black Granite statue. Second dynasty. Cairo.

FIG. 164.—Limestone statue, fourth or fifth dynasty. There are traces of paint

FIG. 165.—Limestone statuette (about two feet high) of Kha-sekhem, reconstructed from fragments found at Hierakonpolis. Ashmolean Museum. A similar statuette made of slate was found at the same place and is now in the Cairo Museum.

To face Fig. 162 *and p.* 224

Koptos, a kneeling statue was found (Fig. 162) showing a higher stage of development, but bearing no marks by which its date could be estimated. In the Cairo Museum there is a rather similar statue (Fig. 163) which used to be assigned to the third dynasty, but it bears the names of three kings who are now known to have been members of the second. That type of statue had several successors. Fig. 164 shows one which is attributed to the fifth dynasty, but many more discoveries will have to be made and much more study devoted to them before any certainty can be obtained concerning the age of all these isolated specimens.

A very different style is seen in a statuette of King Kha-sekemui (Fig. 165). It is better both in conception and in execution, but as he reigned in the second dynasty it cannot be much later than Fig. 163. It represents him as a young man with a quiet, almost melancholy expression, yet on its base are seen those pictographs of the writhing victims of his wars and the numerals 47209, apparently denoting the number of the slain (Fig. 153).

There is a strange and tantalising deficiency of good specimens of the sculptor's art subsequent to this statuette and previous to the small series of noble statues produced during the fourth dynasty. Our experience of the slow evolution of good work among other nations does not encourage the idea that these examples are to be considered merely as sporadic works of isolated men of genius. In the

history of the world lonely manifestations of incomparable excellence are few and far between. They are much less likely to occur in sculpture than in arts such as literature or music, which have fewer limitations, and are less dependent on custom, observation and mechanical skill.

Even if we could get a good series of examples, it is not certain that they would be as instructive as the tentative efforts of the early Greek sculptors. The Egyptian of the early dynasties began to show wonderful talent in his rendering of the human form (Fig. 166), but he did not progress. Later on he concentrated all his attention on the faces of his subjects, and took comparatively little trouble with the other parts of the body (Fig. 170). He seems to have had no inducement to make those careful studies and experiments which helped to build up the noble structure of Greek art. It may be said that this is mere day labourer's work, and that genius ought to be independent of all such petty detail, but in art, as in science, in literature, or even in music, great genius is not made manifest until such labourers have accumulated sufficient material. Then comes the inspiration to weld the scattered parts into one harmonious whole; the world wonders at the grand conception, and ignores the humble work that made it possible.

The genesis of these great flashes of inspiration may for ever remain incomprehensible. They are like the fire from heaven descending on the accumulated

Fig. 166.—Limestone statues of Prince Rahotep and his wife Nefert, found in his tomb (see Fig. 187) at Medum. He is painted red-brown, while she has a yellow tinge. Third or early fourth dynasty. Cairo.

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Fig. 167.—Head of the diorite statue of King Khafra (Chefren, the builder of the second pyramid), fourth dynasty, found by Mariette in the temple of the Sphinx. The black veins of hornblende rather enhance the effect of this very striking figure, but originally it was probably painted. (See *Pyramids and Temples of Gizeh,* Flinders Petrie, 1883, p. 172.) The profile is comparatively commonplace, few early statues look well in a side view. The British Museum has a cast of this statue, painted with a light buff colour. The original is at Cairo.

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Fig. 168.—Limestone statue of Ranofer, a fourth-dynasty official, found at Saqqareh. A similar statue of him with a wig was also found there; both are now at Cairo.

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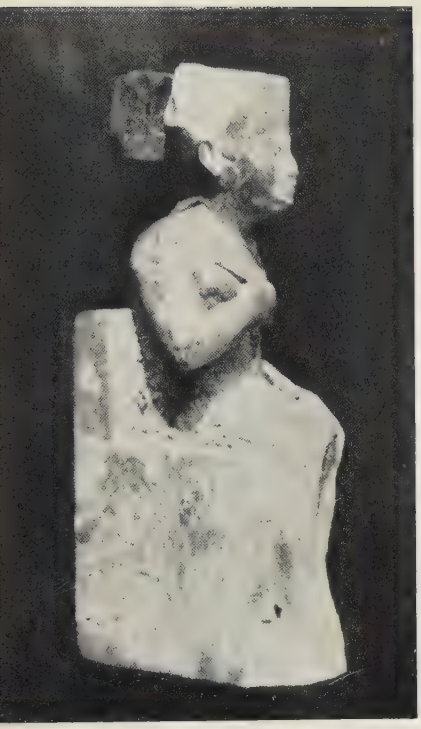
sacrifices offered by patient workers for the welfare of the world. Though we may not dare to scan with prying eyes the origins of such brilliant strokes of genius, yet we may well study, and perhaps may imitate the efforts of those who humbly did their best to furnish forth materials for the illuminating flame.

What then were the inducements which led men to attempt with brush or chisel to express ideas that had not hitherto found any concrete form? We must search for them in the general impulses which awakened the sympathy or compelled the obedience of the nation. At first the main impulse throughout the land was to organise and develop its material resources. Although the intentions of the leading organisers were perhaps unselfish, or at all events not worse than those of most untrammelled rulers, the results of their organisation were afterwards manipulated chiefly for the benefit of those who thought themselves entitled to any advantages they could acquire by cunning or by force. Thus when large-sized reliefs and statues were produced, their chief characteristics were a sense of calm superiority (Fig. 167) or of steadfast organising power (Fig. 168). Even in such a small figure as this ivory statuette of Khufu, the builder of the great pyramid, energy and determination are dominant notes in the expression of the face, and these qualities are reflected in most of the other sculptures of this period (Fig. 169).

It is difficult to form a fair judgment of these re-

markable works. If we compare them with the masterpieces of other nations which have succeeded to the inheritance of mental and spiritual experience bequeathed by all the pioneers of culture, we are struck by their poverty of ideas and the monotony of their execution. If, on the other hand, we approach them with the all too common prepossession that works of the far distant past must necessarily be crude and barbarous, or that people who have not reached a high degree of material civilisation cannot have high ideals, we are lost in admiration of these earliest examples of man's perception of purposes and forces underlying the ordinary routine of the daily struggle for existence. They are certainly far in advance of any hitherto discovered sculptures undoubtedly dating from such a remote period. They seem to mark a sudden and almost unaccountable blossoming of acute artistic faculties and fine conceptions which still awaken a sense of sympathy and admiration. At the same time, while paying all due honour to the deathless records of unnamed workers for dead kings who often left no record save a name, we must not forget that it may some day be proved that they are partly the products of ideas evolved previously by vanished nations dwelling in forgotten lands.

For with nations as with men, the individual perishes though the race is more and more. Who would have imagined fifty years ago that a barbarian tribe of mammoth hunters could have produced works so far surpassing those of later men



a

b

IG. 169.—Ivory statuette (about two inches high) discovered at Abydos in 1902–3. At first it was headless, but as the fracture at the neck was quite fresh, Professor Petrie made the men sift the rubbish for three weeks until they found the head. It represents Khufu, the builder of the great pyramid. Cairo Museum.

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To face

Fig. 170.—Small figure of the daughter of Iechi (or Khui). His wife

Fig. 171.—This statuette is also attributed to the fifth dynasty, but it is a bought specimen and cannot be trusted, as its face may have been "worked over" by the Arabs with the hope of increasing

sixth and twelfth dynasties there is a sad dearth of records, and the progress of events is shrouded in almost complete obscurity. The veil is lifted for a while during the twelfth dynasty, only to fall again and wrap the period of the shepherd kings in impenetrable mystery. Then in the eighteenth dynasty we find Egypt apparently emerging from her seclusion and entering the arena of the world as a gladiator fighting for the ignoble prizes of vain conquest, prizes which withered in her hand or merely helped to foster kingly pride and priestly greed, and to bind fresh chains on her downtrodden population. Freedom and originality were as unwelcome to the Pharaohs as to the Roman emperors or to any other autocratic rulers. How could art flourish under those conditions? The world was dazzled by their splendour and their luxury, and blindly sought for wealth instead of welfare for artificiality instead of art. And even now some men with mediæval minds still sing the praises of such degeneration, and would have us worship the pretentious falsities which are evolved spontaneously in an atmosphere of cruelty and superstition.

The cramping influence of tyranny is plainly seen in the long course of that protracted death which occupies so many chapters in the history of Egyptian art. Sporadic efforts to improve continually recur, and the latent genius of the Egyptian bursts forth with evidence of his desire for truth (Figs. 172, 173, 174, and 175). But the rebel heretics seem to have always been successfully suppressed. Then the official style

FIG. 172.—Ivory carving of a young boy carrying a calf. Found in a twelfth-

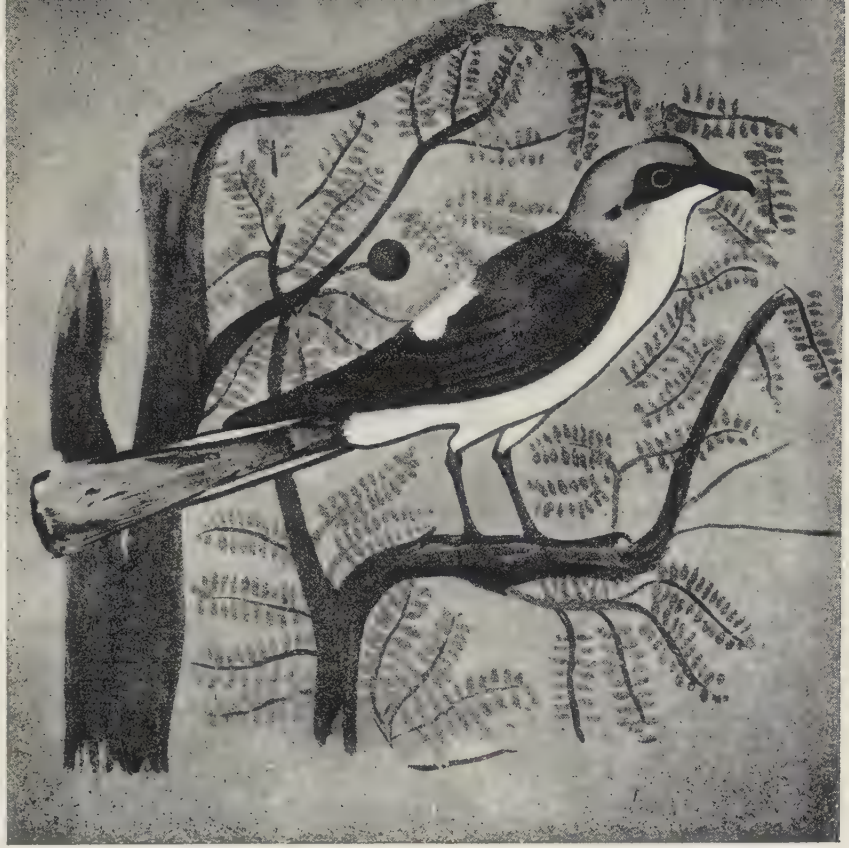

FIG. 173.—Coloured fresco in a twelfth dynasty tomb at Beni Hassan.

To face p.

FIG. 175.—Wooden statuette about three inches high, of unknown origin, but attributed to the twelfth or thirteenth dynasty. Eton College Museum.

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FIG. 176.—Thirteenth-dynasty grave stele, now in the Museum at Leyden. The figure of the harpist is a curious relic of naturalism struggling against the rigidity which official art considered dignified.

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FIG. 177.—Life-size black schist statue of Thothmes III. For security in a time of trouble or for some other reason it had been put with many others into a pit at Karnak and forgotten until Legrain dis-

FIG. 178.—One of the numerous colossal granite statues of Rameses II., about twenty-five feet high, at Luxor. About 1330 B.C.

FIG. 180.—Life-size granite group of husband, wife, and daughter. The marks below his collar represent two amulet bags. Time of Amenhotep III. About 1430 B.C.

resumes its deadening sway (Fig. 176). The pose given to standing male statues during the fourth dynasty is repeated in every subsequent period; the hands clenched on a round object of unknown use; the left leg advanced, the head facing full to the front with but seldom any expression in the rigid features; the ears misplaced or far too large, with no pretence to shapeliness or truth (Figs. 177 and 178). The sitting figures have just as little variation in the arrangement of their limbs or the rendering of the muscles of the body. In certain periods, possibly of Cretan influence, they have unnaturally pinched-in waists (Fig. 179). At other times strange lines and folds are carved upon the trunk, apparently to indicate obesity (Fig. 180). In dealing with female statues and reliefs no attempt is made to utilise the folds of

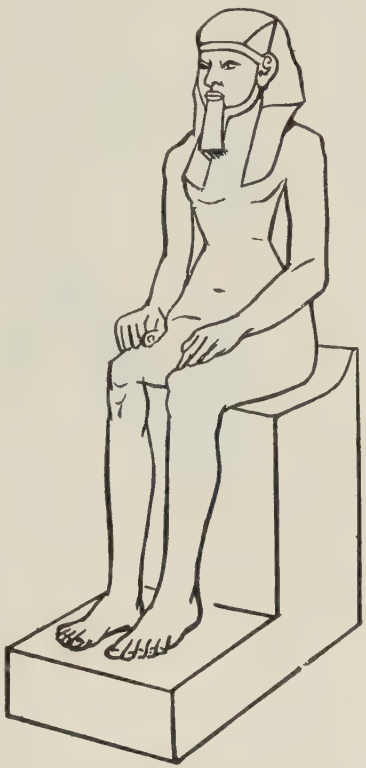

FIG. 179.—Red granite statue, larger than life size, of Sekhem-uatch-tani-Ra, a king of whom nothing is known except that he reigned in the thirteenth or fourteenth dynasty when the Shepherd kings were giving so much trouble. In the slenderness of the waist and the exaggerated width of the hips it resembles the relief figure of Akhnaten (Fig. 193). Two lions in profile standing back to back are faintly incised on the throne.

drapery as factors in the composition of the figures. Their wigs and necklaces and other ornaments are rendered with great care, their hands have elongated fingers, fantastically curved, their uncouth feet have shapeless toes. Only one breast was given to men or to women in the figures in relief made in the earlier dynasties (Fig. 187), and that convention was maintained through all the other dynasties right down to Cleopatra's time, a poor result for thirty centuries of study (Figs. 181 and 182).

From such weak drawing as we saw upon the vases, from those crude colours smeared at Hierakonpolis upon the roughly plastered walls of a prehistoric tomb (Fig. 183), the Egyptians had advanced by careful work and bold experiment, until they had arrived at a high proficiency in simple outline and in elementary colouring, regarded chiefly as a decorative art (Fig. 187). Apparently they did not advance in colour work as far as the old cave men, and they seem to have never reached that point where painting emulates the qualities of sculpture and strives by various tones of colour to represent its figures in relief. But in composition they became far more skilful and also, although their animals were rather stilted and unnatural (Fig. 188), the outlines of their human forms had a keen sense of harmony, of dignity and grace (Fig. 189).

And then all progress ceases. Nature and truth are disregarded. The mental picture of the human form—face, chest, and limbs remembered separately

Fig. 181.—One of the daughters of Tehuti-hetep, a high official of the XII dynasty. When his tomb at El-Bershah was first opened, the walls were covered with great numbers of fresco paintings, representing scenes in the daily life of the Egyptians four thousand years ago. Most of them have now been destroyed or carried away piecemeal by curiosity-mongers. Sketches and coloured plates of the remaining portions are given in El-Bershah I and II, published for the Egyptian Exploration Fund. Contrary to the usual rule of Egyptian painting, the women in these pictures are red-brown. The lotus head-dress is green, with light blue petals. About quarter actual size. Some archæologists have supposed that when only one breast was shown, that part of the figure was imagined as being in profile. The shoulder-straps in this and several other drawings show that the whole body from waist to neck was depicted in front view. To draw both breasts correctly would have required a knowledge of foreshortening, but even its most elementary principles were not discovered until nearly two thousand years later, therefore they drew the outline of that breast which was most evident and omitted the other altogether. The general effect corresponded fairly well with the memory-picture from which the earlier artists made their drawings, and their successors never dared to depart from the established convention. I only know of one drawing in which the nipple of the other breast is indicated.

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FIG. 182.—Low-relief figure of Cleopatra in the Ptolemaic Temple at Denderah. The misplacing of the ear is a very ancient convention for which there seems to be no good reason.

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and pieced together clumsily—remains the standard for succeeding ages, a standard which no artist dares surpass. The full-face eye still stares from the profile head, the chest presents its greatest breadth as though the body were approaching the beholder, while the legs march past another way, and two disjointed arms are twisted round to do their work in equally impossible positions. It is useless to say that these are mere conventions, and should not affect our judgment of Egyptian drawing. A convention is but a step. It represents the highest level of its day, and when surpassed it loses all its value. It becomes interesting merely as a detail in the history of art. The Egyptian artists had well absorbed these separate mental pictures, and had accustomed their fellowmen to see them too. The next step should have been a process of selection, a choosing of the forms that could be suitably combined; but this step was not made in Egypt.

Nigh upon two thousand years before the Cretans, three thousand years before the Greeks, some visions of the meaning and the beauty of God's world appeared to the Egyptians, and they endeavoured to interpret and express it for the enlightenment of other men. But as by an evil spell cast by a great magician, the living, palpitating art is seen to be arrested in its growth, the swift current of its life becomes stagnated; imprisoned in its gilded tomb it stares forth upon mankind rigid and useless and unmeaning.

The reason for this strange stagnation is to be

found in the character of the two main impulses which stirred the Egyptian patron to seek an artist's help. The desire for domination we have already discussed; it cannot lead to variations, for its chief idea is to extinguish rivalry. The other impulse was religious, a word of vague and often much distorted

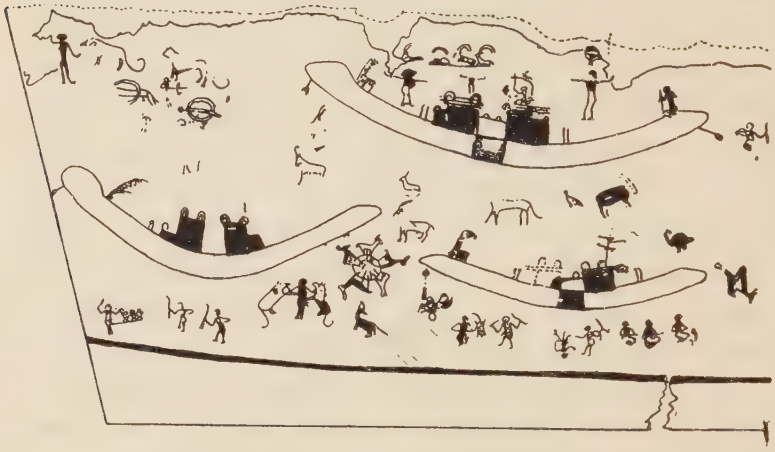

FIG. 183-*a*.

Sketch of a painting found on the wall of an early predynastic tomb (sequence date 63) at Hierakonpolis. The figures are red-brown on a light buff ground. Five of the boats are of a dead white colour; the same colour is

meaning; but it may serve here, since the impulse was chiefly directed by the priests. The strong desire for assurance of existence in a future life has in all ages exposed mankind to the machinations of the unscrupulous. In Egypt, self-centred and sequestered from outside shocks, the contemplative mystic had a grand field for his speculative imagination. Rulers and princes listened gladly to his words, and

from the flimsy substance of his unworldly dreams a small clique of cunning priestly seekers after worldly wealth and luxury fashioned a most potent instrument for forcing contributions from their allies, the ruling and the wealthy classes. Property and priestcraft have always been allied, for what would be the

FIG. 183-*b*.

used for the clothing of the men and women, and for the bodies of some of the animals. A few black touches are added here and there. A coloured plate of this painting was published in *Hierakonpolis*, vol. ii., by the Egyptian Exploration Fund.

use of craft if no material advantage could be obtained? Barren honour does not appeal to ignoble minds. What a purging there would be in all professions if material rewards went out of date!

Besides the ordinary, easy-going, hereditary priests and others who entered the profession merely to gain their daily bread, there must have been many good and saintly men among the priests, and also many

literary or studious recluses; but such folk are as wax in the hands of those astute and clever organisers who hold the reins and guide the destinies of all religious bodies. It is not possible to invent a new religion—that would be as hard a task as the invention of a new language; but religion may be moulded and wielded as a lever wherewith to raise or to oppress the world. The speculative belief in a vital force had been crystallised by these organisers into a hard and fast doctrine, the doctrine of the Ka—sometimes called the double—a sort of counterpart of the body which could not exist happily without some material habitation. The best habitation was the actual body it had occupied in the living world. This conviction encouraged the system of embalming, which brought large gains to those who were supposed to know the only effectual way of doing it. To guard against such a disaster as the destruction of the embalmed body, the idea was fostered that a properly constructed and sanctified image would also serve as a habitation for the Ka. As a logical sequence from these two premises there grew up, step by step, an elaborate system of tomb building and furnishing which gave lucrative employment to the priests, and so greatly strengthened their financial and spiritual power that ultimately they became the real rulers of the nation.

The effect on art was far reaching and persistent. No variation from established types could be permitted, for that would have seemed a confession

that some mistake had been detected, and their authority would consequently have been weakened. Evolution is a hateful word to the rulers of nearly all religions. Archaic forms of speech and action are excellent sedatives; they satisfy the desire for mystery, and do not suggest doubts as to whether they have any real meaning.

But there is a good side to every question. One effect of this belief in the necessity of a material body for the Ka was certainly beneficial, for it gave a great inducement to sculptors to produce good portrait statues. The logical steps which led men to provide that body with food and raiment led them on to build imperishable tombs. Thus arose that simplest and most permanent architectural form, the pyramid, so perfect to Egyptian minds that it was reserved exclusively for royalty.

When the possession of an imperishable tomb had become the ideal of all the wealthy class—the poverty-struck masses of the nation do not seem to have been included in this religious scheme, for according to Asiatic ideals a man who has no property is hardly to be considered as a human being—the next and logically correct step was to furnish it not only with food and raiment, with slaves to do their master's bidding, and with amulets against all evil spirits, but also with property and amusements for those who could afford to pay the priests for such desirable luxuries. Food and raiment, slaves and amulets had indeed been buried with rich men long

before the crystallisation of the doctrine of the Ka, but now the question was how to enable them to take their other property into the shadowy regions of the underworld. In course of time a satisfactory solution of the difficulty was discovered. The Ka itself being a shadowy, unsubstantial form, mere forms or shadows of its former wealth would suffice for its enjoyment in a world where all things were intangible. A picture outlined upon the wall would satisfy the disembodied spirit, and thus a large amount of property could be conveyed into a tomb of practical dimensions.

It was an ingenious arrangement, beneficial not only to the deceased but also to the colleges of priests. It provided lucrative work for their art schools. As for those priests who could not draw they could employ their skill in sanctifying the pictures. Without a blessing and a fee the most artistic picture would have brought no comfort to the poor lonely ghost. And herein lay the germs both of success and failure. At first it must have encouraged the study of nature, for artists and priests worked hand in hand, and their patrons would be pleased by the production of as accurate representations as the infant art of painting could conceive. In course of time the natural inclination of mankind to obtain results with less expenditure of energy would lead the slothful or unskilful to lay more stress upon the efficacy of the priestly blessing. It was difficult to make good pictures. Bad work could perhaps be

recognised and condemned even by the ordinary layman, but he would accept it if he could be tricked into believing that the quality of the picture or sculpture was not so important as the orthodoxy of the incantations spoken over it. The all too common appetite for ostentation and mere quantity would be encouraged, hasty and stereotyped designs would take the place of original and careful work. Aspirations towards more spiritual conceptions would not be welcomed by unworthy priests striving to obtain more worldly power. The desire for material comfort and luxury would be stimulated instead of being restrained, and art would be prostituted to satisfy that desire, projecting the coarse forms of its gross imaginations even into the shadowy regions of a future world. In such environment how can art thrive? It is easy to drive men along a downward path; the relics of the later dynasties show what depths they reached. The ideas which led men to provide an unsubstantial form for the enjoyment of an unsubstantial being, may also have tended to make them reluctant to give the paintings too great an appearance of reality. Their pictures were of the nature of a diagram or of a ground-plan. Indeed, their garden pictures were often real ground-plans with men and trees standing up in them, much in the same way as a modern surveyor's draughtsman will place little trees to show the woods on his map of an estate. There was never any attempt at rendering perspective,[33] neither did they ever try to make

the figures of their men and animals stand out in bold relief, as the cave men had done with such success. To represent solidity in the abode of a phantasmal man would have been almost as bad as sacrilege.

It is very unfortunate that we have so few specimens of early dynastic drawing that we cannot well trace the various steps of its development. The engraved ivory and wooden plaques (Fig. 184) from the royal tombs of the first dynasty are interesting archæologically, and perhaps they may be taken as another confirmation of the theory that drawing in its early stages develops more slowly than carving. One of them shows a man with a curious sort of pigtail (also found on a mace head of the same period), and a long robe, similar to that worn by the clothed figure on that beautiful palette, "Peace and War," and by the old man sculptured in ivory (Fig. 156). The dearth of specimens which confronts us when attempting to study the development of outline drawing is also felt when we consider Egyptian colour work on the flat. From the predynastic period we have only the very crudely coloured drawings found in 1899 at Hierakonpolis (Fig. 183). It is quite possible that very little of such work or of pure outline drawing was done in the earlier dynasties. Specialisation had not yet begun, and artists had not yet realised the natural limitations of all sculpture work, and the latent possibilities of the undeveloped art of painting. In-

Fig. 184.—Incised ivory plaques found in a first-dynasty tomb at Abydos. Actual size. Now at Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

Fig. 186.—The upper portion is about five feet long and is now in the Ashmolean. It represents men catching birds in a ground net, similar to that still used in Italy. From the tomb of Atet, wife of Nefermat. Medum. See p. 242.

Fig. 185.—Ordinary coloured fresco from the brick passage leading to Nefermat's tomb. All his other frescoes were "inlaid" on stone. This portion is about five feet long. Most of these paintings were destroyed when Mariette tried to remove them in the early 'seventies.

deed, the distinction between drawing and sculpture was hardly recognised. Drawings were generally executed by incision more or less deep. If the interior edges of deeply incised drawings were rounded off, the result would now be considered as a "sunk relief," and would be classed as sculpture, although, indeed, it would be hard to say exactly when it had ceased to be mere drawing (Fig. 176). It would be rash to assert that this actually was the origin of sunk relief. We have seen that low relief is infinitely older than any plastic work of the Egyptians; they lived in a much more complex age than the old cave men, and there were so many influences affecting all their art that it is difficult or perhaps impossible to trace the actual origin of any special branch. Their low relief may have been a degeneration from sculpture in the round, or it may have been evolved as an imitation of repoussé metal work, although this seems hardly probable.

Painting had certainly not yet become a special branch. Colour was used only as a means of enhancing the effect of representations made by sculpture or by its still weakly offshoot outline drawing. In fact until the palæolithic invention of toning had been reinvented there was but little scope for painting as an independent art. We shall have to pass over many centuries before finding any signs of such a reinvention, for there is very little evidence that the effects of light and shade were ever utilised by the Egyptians

in their representations on the flat. Even in later times, when polychrome work had become common, it was only used to show the various colours of birds' plumage or of the hides of animals. In that style of art high excellence had already been attained as early as the third dynasty, when the justly famous geese were painted at Medum (Fig. 185).

In the same place and at the same period a curious experiment in colour work was made by or for a high official called Nefermat. It was a sort of inlaid fresco formed by filling up with various coloured pastes the figures cut and rather undercut in the flat stone wall (Fig. 186). In an inscription he says that "he made this to his gods in his writing unspoilable," but it did not prove very enduring. Much of the paste crumbled away or dropped out bodily, and when the tomb was discovered only a few portions were found well enough preserved to be worth rescuing from the relic hunters.

The commonest use of colour, as far as we can judge from the specimens hitherto discovered, was as a mere flat wash on the figures in relief. The bare skin of men was painted brown, while that of women was tinted yellow (Fig. 187). A special colour was often conventionally assigned to certain substances, and they were sometimes quite as unsuitable as the colours employed in the same way by heralds and mediæval monks. Reliefs and paintings can therefore best be studied as a single class, and they are chiefly to be regarded as outline drawings. From

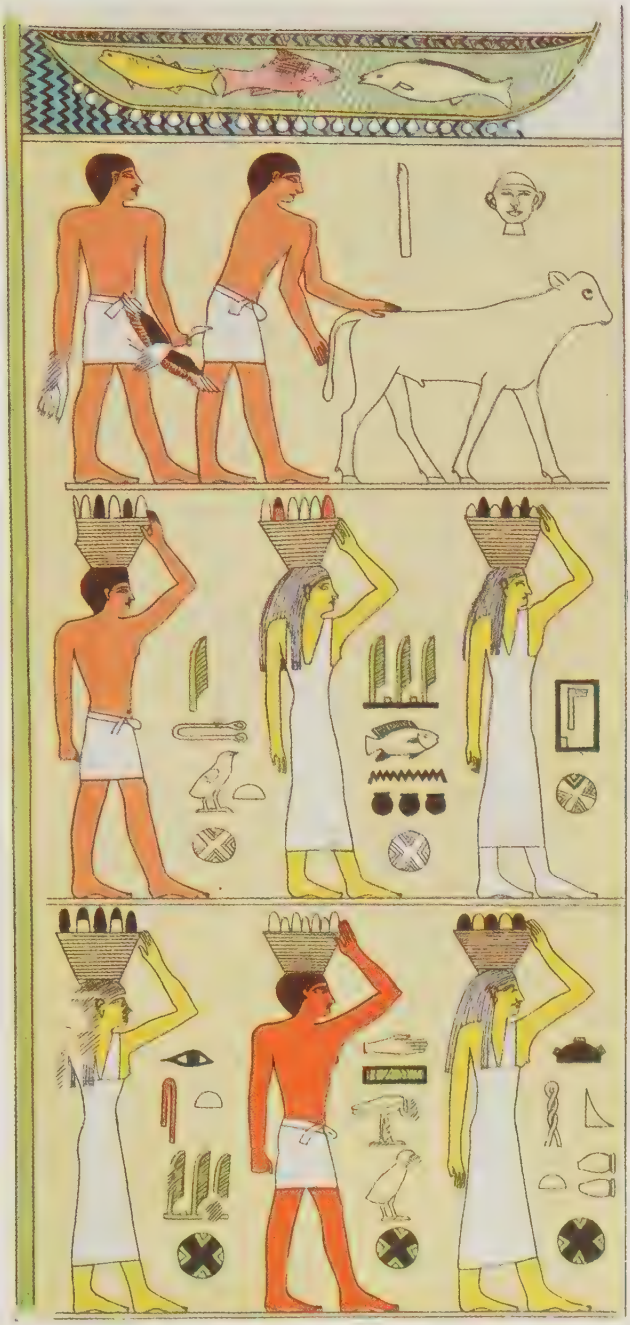

Fig. 187.

PLATE X.

Fig. 187—Figures carved in low relief on the walls of Rahotep's tomb at Medum. They were copied by Professor Petrie in 1896 and published in his report on the excavations he made there. Like many other ancient monuments in Egypt they were insufficiently protected from the ravages of curiosity mongers. When the greater part of them had been irretrievably ruined the rest were removed to the Cairo Museum in 1911. This portion represents slaves bringing funeral offerings to Rahotep to sustain him in the other world. The figures are about one-third life size.

To face p. 242.

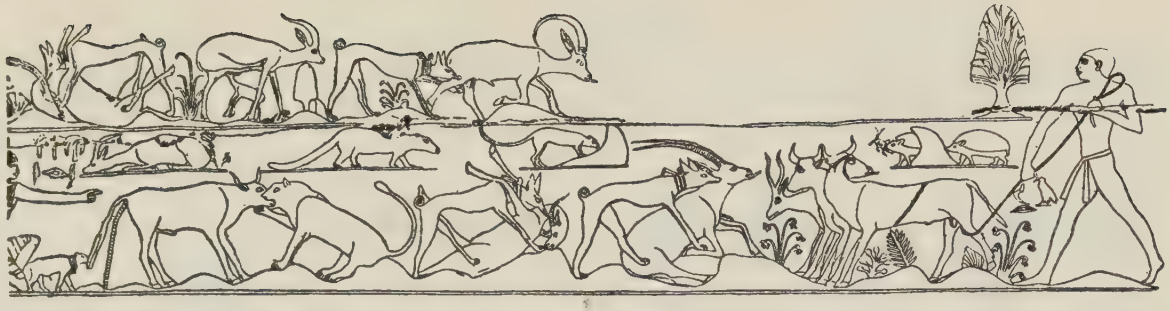

FIG. 188.—In nearly all reliefs and paintings, previous to the golden age of Greece, the figures of men and animals were drawn without any indication of the scene or even of the ground, beyond an occasional simple straight line forming the bottom boundary of the picture. This is a noteworthy instance of a bold departure from that rule. It is almost the only example of any attempt to represent hills otherwise than by merely conventional signs.

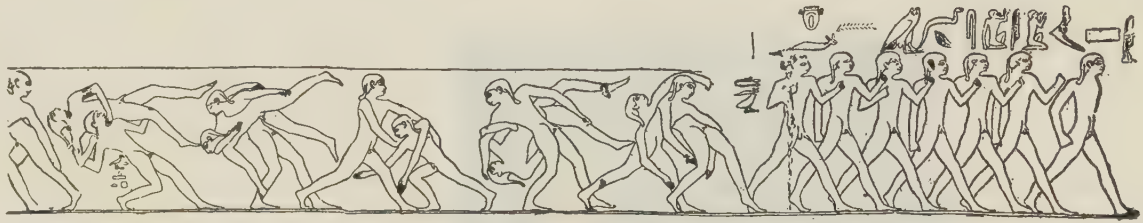

FIG. 189.—Boys wrestling and racing. The best work of its sort ever done in Egypt. For a thousand years or more we find no evidence that any other race was able to surpass it.

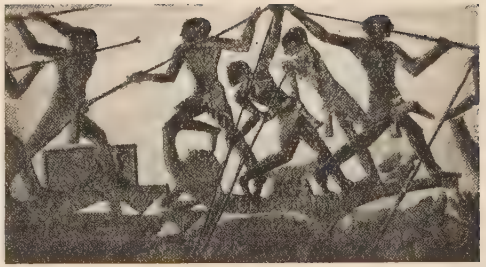

FIG. 190-*a*.

FIG. 190-*b*.

The man drinking from a vase is thought to be the sculptor of this series of reliefs (Figs. 188, 189, 190) since the hieroglyphs of chisels and the name Ankh-en-Ptah are placed above him; but as usual the artist's name is not mentioned. They were carved on the walls of Ptah-Hotep's tomb at Saqqara. VI. dynasty 2750 B.C. Fig. 190 *a* is from a photograph lent by Prof. Petrie.

that point of view they have very great merit. It is difficult to believe that such spirited delineation and such excellent composition (Figs. 188, 189, and

FIG. 191.—Sunk relief on the wall of the temple at Medinet Abu, near Thebes, representing the defeat of the confederation of the Cretans, Philistines and Hittites by Rameses III. (1200 B.C.). The style is not unlike that of the Bayeux tapestry. A few of the foreigners are depicted full face.

190) can be the work of men who died five or six thousand years ago, and who had apparently no previous schools of art from which to draw encouragement or warning. They show what strides

an art may make when it has opportunity and the stimulus of a widely-felt and definite, but not ignoble purpose. It was a misfortune for the world that such skill and genius should have been directed and controlled by men who had slight sympathy with freedom or with truth. The later crowded and elaborate compositions (Fig. 191) show how little progress can be made when the strong currents of artistic purpose are diverted, and forced into narrow channels to drive the wheels of base machinery for the extortion of more pay.

Since most of these productions were buried out of sight in well-sealed tombs, the stagnation may perhaps be attributed partly to the lack of criticism and of comparison with previous works. The absence of the healthy stimulus of wide appreciation must have been lowering to the general tone. How can art prosper if so many of its children are buried as soon as they are born?

There is one example (Fig. 192) of an attempt to improve upon that time-honoured system of painting the bodies of men and animals with a flat sheet of colour, variegated if the subject required it, but never toned to show the play of light and shade on rounded or uneven surfaces. Formerly it was always quoted as the earliest instance of the use of high lights to give the effect of relief; since the discoveries in France and Spain it has lost much of its interest. It merits attention, however, as additional evidence of that violent, though only temporary, breaking

Fig. 192.—Fresco from Tell-el-Amarna representing the daughters of Akhenaten. It is in the Ashmolean Museum, but the white paint on the thighs can hardly be seen now. Possibly other artists have also experimented with toning and with high lights powdered or painted over their flat colours, and time has effaced all records of their discoveries. Professor E. A. Gardner found a vase at Naukratis showing distinct traces of such a process in early Greek times, but the powdery substance soon fell off.

The drawing of these little princesses and of most of the productions of this period is very poor, though it is less rigid than the old official style.

Fig. 193. — Limestone slab from Tell-el-Amarna, 3 feet high, with sunk relief figures of Akhenaten and his wife worshipping the sun. Compare his slender waist and wide hips with those of the Cretan, Fig. 317 *bis*. It was probably his foreign sympathies rather than his religious heterodoxy which alienated his people. They would hardly be able to follow the theological hair-splitting of the priests, or to understand the wickedness of worshipping the sun's rays instead of the sun's disk.

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away from long tradition which occurred in the eighteenth dynasty 1580–1350 B.C. The new style of art was especially in favour during the reign of the well-intentioned Akhenaten, 1375 B.C.[34] (Fig. 193), the so-called heretic, a pathetic figure in the monotonous annals of the kings of Egypt, most of whom seem to have been possessed by the evil spirits of greed and fear, oppressing their own people and being oppressed by their own priests.

It is difficult to form a right estimate of his character and of his actions. He has been called "a fanatical heretic of the worst description,"[35] and he has been lauded as a great reformer. Mr. Weigall has written a long and interesting book about him (*The Life and Times of Akhenaten* (1910)), and has by no means exhausted the subject. All we can now say is, that in religion he rebelled against the priests of Amon, and in art he tried to encourage a system more naturalistic and less trammelled with conventions than that which had been forced upon the people for twenty centuries of the past, and was to hinder all progress for still another twenty centuries of the future, until it was too late to revive the latent germs that once had stirred the world.

The original source of Akhenaten's strange artistic revolution is still unknown. It may have come from Crete, for many signs have been found that, long before his time, Cretan art had been sufficiently developed to act as a ferment even in a land so highly civilised as Egypt. In fact, Crete's most flourishing

period was during the troublous times that Egypt passed through in the interval between the twelfth and the eighteenth dynasties. Also an earlier period of Cretan art development is to be noticed as nearly coincident with the depression which Egyptian art experienced during the five centuries that elapsed between the sixth and twelfth dynasties. These fluctuations were probably connected with variations in the political conditions of the two countries. We are tempted to try to trace in them the vicissitudes of a struggle between the Mediterranean race and the Semitic element poured forth from Arabia, between European naturalism and Asiatic conventionalism, Western freedom and Eastern bondage; but the time is not yet ripe for such wide generalisations. At present we have to be content with patiently noting details, and trying to deduce some sense of order out of the chaotic mass of evidence, which even now is all too scanty and imperfect.

There is one detail which does not seem to have generally received the attention it deserves—that is, the absence of full-face drawing from all dynastic Egyptian work before 1600 B.C. Certainly we get a full-face head as a hieroglyphic sign in the first dynasty (Fig. 136), and in representations of the cow-faced goddess Hathor (Figs. 194 and 148), and of that strange god Bes (Fig. 195), but in all the other numerous delineations of men and women, frequently arranged in postures extremely difficult to draw correctly, I can find no instance of any but the rigidly

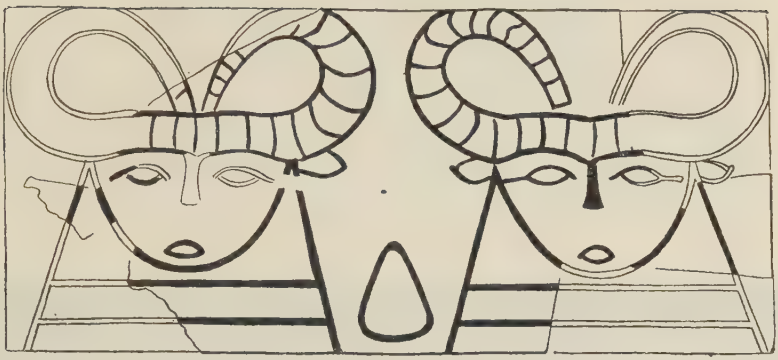

FIG. 194.—The black lines are a transcript of a drawing on ivory found in a royal tomb of the first dynasty at Abydos. It represents Hat-hor, who was supposed to take the form of a cow. Compare the heads at the top of Figs. 148 and 149.

FIG. 195.—Part of a figure of Bes, incised on an ivory amulet or magic wand to give "protection to the lady of the house." Eighteenth dynasty or earlier. In the British Museum (Fourth Egyptian Room). He is often represented as clothed with a panther's skin, and as his name means "a small feline animal" the custom of drawing him always in full face may be connected with the ancient and persistent fashion of giving a full face to those animals (see page 138).

profile face. With the advent of the eighteenth dynasty we get occasional examples of a full-face drawing. Even then it is only given to captive or slaughtered foreigners (Fig. 191), to workpeople (Fig. 196), or to musicians, who probably were slaves (Fig. 197). In connection with this illustration, taken from a painting now in the British Museum, I may mention a pitfall which is a good instance of the danger of drawing deductions from copies of a picture instead of from the original. The painting is not only incorrectly reproduced in Champollion's great work, *Monuments de l'Egypte et de la Nubie* (Paris, 1835–45), Pl. 377 *ter*, but he mistakenly attributes it to a twelfth dynasty tomb at Beni Hassan. Perrot and Chipiez, in their *History of Ancient Art*, vol. ii. p. 343, copied the incorrect drawing, and devoted half a page to discussing the strangeness of finding such an early instance of full-face drawing. Their copy has been reproduced in other works, and many unfortunate foreign and provincial readers may be led astray; for even if they take the trouble to work back through Perrot and Chipiez to Champollion, they would have some difficulty in ascertaining that he was wrongly informed. The original is now in the British Museum, and did not come from a tomb at Beni Hassan, but from a tomb at Thebes.

The importance of these full-face drawings lies in the possibility that they may help to trace the source of some art motives. Sir Arthur Evans tells me that no drawings, nor even low reliefs, of that sort have

IG. 196*a*.—Part of the drawing of the slab (Fig 196*b*) given in Rosellini's *Monumenti Civili del Egitto* (1835), No. 63. I do not know any other instance of a really childlike face in ancient art, but it is not now visible upon the slab. The man's arms are so incorrectly copied that possibly the boy's face is equally inaccurate, or may even have been invented altogether by the draughtsman.

FIG. 196*b*.—Part of a white limestone slab with two rows of figures in sunk-relief. It was brought from Egypt by Rosellini, but its exact origin and period are unknown. From internal evidence it is assigned to the eighteenth dynasty. The boy blowing the bellows for the metal worker is about five inches high. Archæological Museum, Florence. Photograph by Alinari presented by Mrs. Sellon.

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FIG. 197.—Part of coloured fresco from Thebes, now in the British Museum. About one-quarter actual size.

To face p. 250

yet been found in Crete. There is, however, a regular series of such representations to be found among the Chaldean reliefs and cylinders. Some of them show a deity seated in a chair, but the chair is in profile,

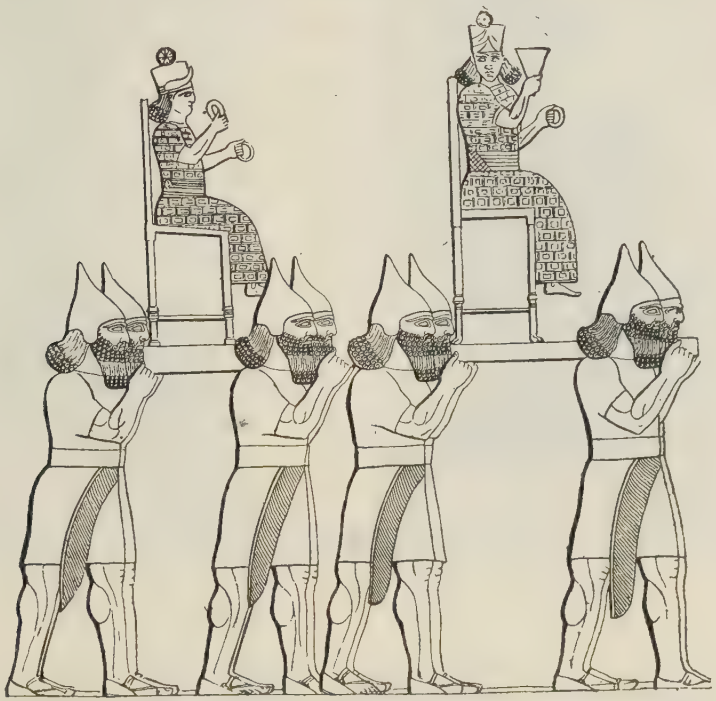

FIG. 198.—Drawing copied from Layard's Nineveh of a relief discovered by him and brought to England. It was sent by mistake to the Bristol Museum and not properly housed. It is now in the British Museum (Assyrian Saloon, No. 863), but as the face is quite unrecognisable, it is impossible to say how far the drawing is correct. Size about four feet high.

and the deity is turning its head to face the spectator (Figs. 242 and 258). This motive was very persistent, for in an Assyrian relief of about 740 B.C. we find soldiers carrying the image of a goddess in exactly

the same attitude (Fig. 198). Quite recently a small wooden seated figurine (Fig. 199) having this attitude was bought in Egypt by Dr. Longstaffe and presented to the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. It bears no inscription, and its origin cannot be traced, but it is attributed to the eighteenth dynasty. The figures on the horoscopes of the twentieth dynasty also have this curious attitude (Fig. 200). They may have been derived from Chaldea, as that country was famous for its astrologers. This all points to Western Asia as a possible source of Akhenaten's art revolution. It has often been said that eighteenth dynasty art was affected by Syrian influence even before Akhenaten's time, but no definite evidence has been forthcoming; very little is known about Syrian art in that or any other early period. It is to be noted that except Bes, Hathor, and the composite Tet, the only deity represented full-face in Egyptian art is the goddess Qetesh (Fig. 200 *bis*). Dr. Budge, in his *Gods of the Egyptians* (1904), says she is of Syrian origin, but gives no reference

FIG. 200.—The regular type of figure depicted on the astrological tablets of the twentieth dynasty. A similar figure occurs on a twelfth-dynasty sarcophagus.

a *b*

FIG. 199.—Wooden figurine about three inches high bought at Gizeh. I cannot hear of any other figures of this sort, though possibly there may be several lying unnoticed on the shelves of various museums.

As all the other examples of a profile figure showing a full face are low reliefs, it might have been thought that possibly they represented "two-faced" gods, especially since they face sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left. Such prototypes of Janus do occur in Chaldean work—there is a good example in the Berlin Museum—but this specimen seems to show that the reliefs did not represent a double-faced deity.

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by which one can trace the period or the manner of her arrival in Egypt. Apparently there is no extant Syrian monument representing her.

These momentary glimpses of foreign influence open up curious vistas of thought. Perhaps the rigid profile position was a long sustained religious protest against the strange old gods of Babylonia. Or did the priests imagine that it was not dignified for a god to turn his head and seem to take some interest in what was going on around him? Art motives are an interesting study, but the underlying impulses which create those motives are of far more entrancing interest. These full-face pictures of the deities may possibly be connected with the worship of the sun, a kindly god in the temperate climate of Chaldea, but a fierce malignant power in Southern Egypt.

FIG. 200 *bis*.—Defaced figure in high relief of the goddess Qetesh or Kent on a limestone sepulchral stele of a master craftsman of the nineteenth dynasty. The robe of these female statues is often only indicated by a line at the neck and at the ankles, so that when these parts are damaged it is difficult to determine whether the statue was really nude. Dr. Budge says that the earlier representations were nude, but he gives no instances. In Greek work the development was in the contrary direction. British Museum. Size about twelve inches.

Akhenaten's vain effort seems to be a good example of the rule that art growth springs from the mass and not from a few enthusiasts. He and his clique had no support from the downtrodden nation, and when he died the priests of Amon regained their overbearing sway. They cursed his excommunicated ghost, and drove it to wander homeless and starving through the dreary deserts of this world and of the world to come. They were not very clear in their ideas whether there was any boundary between the two. Henceforth there was no hope for art in Egypt. She could and did acquire power and wealth and luxury, but her great soul was dead.

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